

**CASTE, RELIGION AND THE STATE:
A SOCIO-POLITICAL STUDY OF SECULARISM IN INDIA**

**Thesis submitted for the award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science**

By

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SEPTEMBER 2011



**Faculty of Social Sciences
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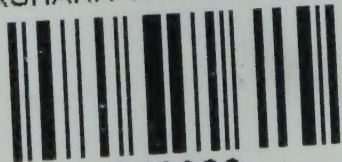
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AKSHARA GRANTHALAYA



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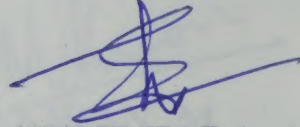


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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis **Caste, Religion and the State: A Socio-Political Study of Secularism in India** is a bonafide research work carried out by **Kiran. M** under my guidance and supervision and is being submitted to the Kannada University, Hampi for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science. The results presented in this thesis have not previously formed the basis for the award of any other degree or diploma.

Place: Hampi
Date: 2-9-2011



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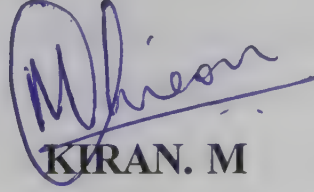
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled **Caste, Religion and the State: A Socio-Political Study of Secularism in India** is the outcome of my own study undertaken under the direct guidance and supervision of **Dr. Shridhara. A. Ph.D.**, Associate Professor, Department of Development Studies, Kannada University, Hampi.

This has not been submitted previously by me to any other University.

Place: Hampi

Date: 2-9-2011



KIRAN. M

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The study of secularism in India as a counter ideology to communalism has been the main thrust in academics. The discussion ranged from the state and religious controversies of the sixteenth century in Europe to the diagnosis of modernity. Instead of making an effort to understand the rise of communal problem secular discourse in India is more pre-occupied with critique of western concept of secularism and modernity. My interest in pursuing a doctoral degree on secularism in India grew when no reference was made to the growing atrocities on the dalits, tribes and marginalised groups. Religious politics of the majority community was not only antagonistic to other religious minorities but also internally oppressive. Delinking the role of religion in the social structures has been an important feature of secular analysis in India. But the history of religions shows that hierarchical orders were legitimised by religion. Hierarchical feudal order in Europe derived legitimacy from Christianity. Similarly caste system is a unique feature of Hinduism. Blanket rejection of secularism as western phenomena inappropriate to Indian conditions where religion has a dominant role have left the subalterns without a progressive ideology for emancipation. The present study is just a modest attempt to bring the struggles against caste restriction, movements against varna social order, emergence of the lower castes for social equality and their ideological thrust for egalitarianism into the debate on secularism and the process of secularization in India.

Teaching and research are complimentary. Teaching in an undergraduate college with additional responsibilities concentrating full time on research was quite difficult. I was fortunate that I was selected by UGC and granted two years leave. This research was completed by the leave granted by UGC under the Faculty Improvement Programme. My special gratitude to UGC and Department of Collegiate Education for relieving me of my duties to pursue my research.

I am very grateful to Dr. A Murigeppa, the honorable Vice Chancellor of Kannada University, Hampi for his support and guidance. I owe my special gratitude to Prof. Manjunath Bevinakatti, Registrar, Kannada University, Hampi

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Initially, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Shridhara.A who gave me an opportunity to do this research in which I am really interested, and make this thesis possible in the Department of Development Studies, Kannada University, Hampi. He freely discussed the problems I faced during my research and gave encouragement during the preparation of my draft. I also thank Dr. Siddagangamma, HOD & all the staff members of Development Studies for their co-operation, encouragement and friendly attitude. I also extend my thanks to my friend Ramesh Nayak, HOD, Department of Ancient History and Archaeology for standing by me in all difficult times. I extend my gratitude to library staff of Kannada University for helping me in locating books and articles.

I cannot help expressing how sincerely I acknowledge the support and guidance of Prof. G. Aloysius. Whenever I dropped in at his home or office he very affectionately gave me a patient hearing and shared information and expertise. His encouragement and stimulation throughout not only in writing this thesis but also moulding my thoughts is more than what I can describe.

Major reading and writing was done at Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, New Delhi. I thank the library staff of NMML and JNU. I specially thank Ajith, Sheela, Unni ,Ammu and Josna for giving me a home away from home during my stay in Delhi.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years the concept secularism has gained much of the space in academic discussion, debate and writings in India. In the world of ideas secularism is a hotly contested concept. In social science it is a controversial and highly debated topic. There is no unanimity among scholars as to what constitutes secularism. The meaning of secularism is hotly contested not only in India but also in the west. Head scarf controversy, wearing burqa in public, display of religious identity and the role of the state in enforcing the ban on public display of religious symbols and identities have brought the analysis of secularism and secularisation into the mainstream academic and political discourse. There is a general consensus among scholars that secularism emerged out of the conflict and controversies in Europe between the church and the state, between the ecclesiastical authorities and state authorities, between the king and the pope. In the process of understanding the relationship between the state and the religious authorities various aspects concerning the role of the church, the importance of religion, the role of religion, the legitimacy of the state, the development of the modern nation state, modernity, enlightenment, secularism, secularisation etc are analysed conceptually and historically.

Secularism is broadly understood as a doctrine that rejects religion and religious considerations. From this multiple explanations are given to the concept of secularism. Scholars have taken the stand that religious belief should not influence public and governmental decisions. As a concept secularism implies that government or other entities should exist separately from religion and religious beliefs. In matters of social and political significance religion and religious considerations should be ignored or excluded and as an ethical system it asserts that moral judgements should be made without reference to religious doctrine, as

a reward or punishment in an afterlife. The Hindi word that is commonly used in India for “secularism” is *dharmanirapekshata* which means “indifference towards religion”.

Despite the importance given to secularism there is a great deal of disagreement of what it really stands for. The terms “secular,” “secularism,” and “secularization” have a range of meanings. These words derive from the Latin word *saeculum*, which means both this age and this world and is the opposite of religious. In the middle ages, secular referred to priests who worked out in the world of local parishes, as opposed to priests who took vows of poverty and secluded themselves in monastic communities. These latter priests were called “religious.” During the Reformation, secularization denoted the seizure of Catholic ecclesiastical properties by the state and their conversion to non-religious use. In all these instances, the secular indicates a distancing from the sacred, the eternal, and the otherworldly.

As a doctrine, secularism is usually used to describe any philosophy which forms its ethics without reference to religious dogmas and which promotes the development of human art and science. The term secularism was created in 1846 by George Jacob Holyoake in order to describe “a form of opinion which concerns itself only with questions, the issues of which can be tested by the experience of this life”. Explaining the term further Holyoake says: “Secularism is that which seeks the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest possible point, as the immediate duty of life — which inculcates the practical sufficiency of natural morality apart from Atheism, Theism or the Bible — which selects as its methods of procedure the promotion of human improvement by material means, and proposes these positive agreements as the common bond of union, to all who would regulate life by reason and ennoble it by service”¹. The focus of secularism was upon the material and upon this world rather than the immaterial or the spiritual world. There is lack of evidence to show that secularism involves the absence of religion. The concept of secularism was originally developed as a non-religious philosophy focused upon the needs and concerns of humanity in this life. It rejected the possible

needs and concerns associated with any possible afterlife. Today secularism is used in restricted sense retaining the philosophical aspect in social and political situations. It carries a strong connotation to establish an autonomous political and social sphere which is free and opposed to religious realm where faith and supernatural takes precedence.

Secularism and secularization are closely related, but they differ because they are entirely two different processes and offer different answers to the role of religion in state and society. Secularism argues generally for a sphere of knowledge, values, and action that is independent of religious authority, but it does not necessarily exclude religion from having any authority over political and social affairs. Secularization, however, is a process which does involve such an exclusion. During the process of secularization, institutions throughout society - economic, political, and social are removed from the control of religion. Those institutions which were under the control of religious authorities are handed over to political leaders, or alternative secular institutions are created alongside the religious institutions. The independence of these institutions in turn allows individuals themselves to be more independent of ecclesiastical authorities. They are no longer required to submit to religious leaders outside of the confines of a church or temple. A practical consequence of secularization is the separation of church and state.

Another aspect of secularization is that it is associated with differentiation. Differentiation describes the growing division of labour in modern society as life goes through a process of fragmentation into numerous spheres, each operating according to its own laws and principles. As result religion loses its integrating principle or narrative that holds social life, institutions, ideas, and ideals together. Since the end of the 19th century, it has been recognised by scholars of religion that the institutions embodying religion have been transformed by the process of secularization.

The division of church and state, and the rise of secular-rational bureaucratic states and representative governments, displaced the rule of spiritual leaders,

ecclesiastical institutions, and hereditary rulers claiming authority from God. The relationship between state and religion is central to the study of secularism. There are fundamental differences as to how various states in Europe negotiated religion and broke its umbilical cord with the church, church induced Christianity and developed political values, civil society and democratic institutions over which modern nation states were built. The historical example of west European state formation offers a perspective and a prevalent model of secular states. The history of secularism in the west is primarily to mean not just the conflict between king and the pope but the overall development of the nation-state and the socio political values embedded in enlightenment. Anti church, Protestantism, industrializing forces all were simultaneously pushing for the democratization of religion, society and the state. It would be difficult to give precedence to anyone. The protestant revolution initiated reformation within church and let loose various kings to free themselves from the clutches of the Pope. They aligned with various religious formations like Lutheranism, Calvinism etc. Hence secularism has to be located holistically in the emergence of state in modernity and enlightenment.

The relationship between religion and state has largely revolved around the question of the relationship between ruler and the institution of organised religion. The relationship between individual and religion and religion and society is largely ignored in the analysis of secularism. The issues are inter-related. Modern states are socio-political systems. In pre modern states religion played the dual role of legitimizing the political institutions/state and hierarchical social order. The distinction between pre modern societies/state and modern societies/state is that pre modern state derived its legitimacy from religion and the social structure was hierarchical. As Bryan Wilson says, 'religion in the past solemnized men's social relationship and their community life'². Similarly Thomas O'Dea explains the role of religion in answering the problem of meaning. The functional aspect of religion sanctifies the norms of established social order by providing beliefs and orientations of men's present life by transcending the daily experience. He says 'religion sacralises the norms and values of established society, maintaining the dominance

of group goals over individual wishes and of group discipline over individual impulses. It thereby reinforces the legitimation of the division of functions, facilities and rewards characteristic of a given society.....religion sacralises the norms and values, contributing to social order; legitimates the allocation patterns of society, thereby aiding order and stability; and aids in reconciliation of the disaffected'³. The evolution of the western societies is closely linked to the Christian societal values. Talcot Parsons remarks that 'at every stage the religious system and its values have stood on complex relations of interdependence with other factors, notably economic and political organisation and interests, the underlying institutions of kinship and social stratification and certain aspect of secular culture'⁴. In feudalism Church was closely interwoven with the feudal system so much so that 'church as property holder became Lord with temporal political jurisdiction, a circumstance that gave rise to a basic question of allegiance: where did it lie, with the church or the secular authority'⁵. But the modern states derive its legitimacy from the will of the people where the social imagination is horizontal i.e. based on equality.

If the political scientist has analysed secularism from the point of the development of the state and its rupture with the church and other religious institutions the sociologist has taken up the study of religion from the point of understanding religion not as theology concerned with metaphysical and unknown and unexplainable things but as a social product. The classical pioneers of sociology of religion are Durkheim and Max Weber. Durkheim has argued that religious phenomena emerge in any society when a separation is made between the sphere of the profane—the realm of everyday utilitarian activities—and the sphere of the sacred—the area that pertains to the transcendental, the extraordinary. For Durkheim an object is intrinsically neither sacred nor profane. It becomes the one or the other depending on whether men choose to consider the utilitarian value of the object or certain intrinsic attributes that have nothing to do with its instrumental value⁶.

In contrast Weber believed that the rationalization of action can only be realized when traditional ways of life are abandoned. Modern people often have a difficult time realizing the hold of tradition on pre-industrial peoples. Tradition was overpowering in pre-modern societies. Why did people abandon their traditional religious value orientation and acquire a desire for goods and wealth? Weber believed that protestant ethic broke the hold of tradition while it encouraged men to apply themselves rationally to their work. He contends that Christianity in general and Protestantism in particular had brought social and economic benefits to large parts of Europe. In his seminal work 'The Protestant work ethic and the spirit of capitalism' Weber argued that Protestantism had made capitalism more dynamic than it would have been without the Reformation⁷. Protestantism in Northern Europe drove social and economic forward with the eventual consequence of losing its doctrinal dynamism and losing the most influence due to secularization⁸.

The sociology of religion is concerned with charting the progress of secularization. The general assumption was that processes such as industrialization, urbanization, rationalization, bureaucratization, and modernization were responsible for a gradual erosion of religious beliefs and practices. Like other ideological manifestation religion is seen as another form of expression in society. Otto Maduro says that the sociology of religion is 'concerned with the influence exerted by religious institutions on social processes and with the conditioning imposed by the dynamics of society on the forms and expression of religion'⁹. Further he says that 'no religion exists in vacuum. Every religion..... is a situated reality – situated in a specific human context, a concrete and determined geographical space, historical moment and social milieu'¹⁰. The implications of socially situating religion according to Maduro are firstly members who act within the religion do not move about within an infinite set of simultaneous alternatives for thinking, expressing or practicing their religion and secondly no religion operates in a society already structured in a particular manner¹¹.

The study of sociology of religion helps us to understand secularism and the process of secularisation. Unlike the study of secularism in political science, limiting it to a small episode of church state controversy of European history, sociology of religion looks at decline of religion in simultaneous multiple developments within state, science, enlightenment, economy, culture, ideology and religion itself. According to the sociologist of religion three important factors played an important role in the decline of religion in society and polity

1. Protestantism: The first challenge to the established Church came within Christianity in the form of Protestant movement led by Martin Luther. The protestant movement questioned the final authority of the church and the pope in interpreting sacred text and more importantly ‘ending the individuals’ dependence on sacerdotal mediation’¹². The Protestant Reformation led to the fragmentation of Western Christendom, with diverse sects and denominations emphasizing alternative beliefs and doctrines. Multiple religious sects, new religious movements emerged and vernacular translation of bible multiplied ending the unity and religious monopoly of the church. The impact of it is brilliantly summarised by Bryan Wilson – “... Protestantism swept away not only many dubious teaching and practices concerning the Virgin Mary, for which there was no scriptural warrant; but also the system of ‘dispensations’ from the penalties of sin, by which the Church comforted the rich and earned money for itself; the influence of relics and shrines and the whole apparatus of sacerdotalism, together with the requirement that the priests be celibate”¹³. The growth of sects and new religious movements departed in ritual practices and act which triggered a process of internal secularisation within the churches¹⁴.

2. Emergence of National States: One of the important outcome of protestant reformation was the emergence of national states. ‘The Reformation permanently broke the medieval form of religious unity of western Christendom, and a Europe was created in which religious and political elements were interwoven in a very intricate, pluralistic fashion’ says Talcot Parsons¹⁵. The

importance of the emergence of state is closely associated with the decline of religion is also pointed out by Wilson¹⁶. Under the despotic monarchs national states like Britain and France were unified which paved the way for establishing strong national sovereign states by struggling against the feudal order as well as the Church. The emergence of national sovereign states and the rise of nationalism crushed the old feudal order and the supremacy of the church.

3. Growth of Science: Wilson argues that along with the development of state another agency which played an important role in the decline of religion in the west was the growth of science¹⁷. The growth of science questioned the religious interpretation and explanation of the world. European society in the medieval period was greatly influenced by the church. Education was religiously oriented. But with renaissance began rational enquiry. Detachment in observation and experimentation questioned the religious explanation of the world and gave new explanation to the nature of the world. The rational and empirical knowledge questioned the supernatural conceptions of the world. The religious explanation was that Earth was stationary and centre of the earth. Sun and other heavenly bodies moved around it. The Copernican revolution scientifically explained and demonstrated that the earth moved around a fixed sun. This shattered the foundations of the religiously oriented old world. The divine origin of heaven, earth and life were ruthlessly questioned. Maduro says “in succession anti clerical, agnostic and atheistic philosophies multiplied, sects proliferated and opposed and disputed currents of thought held forth from ecclesiastical chaos of learning. Theology’s place was taken by the natural sciences..... a great part of the funds that disappeared from the sacristy turned up in the hands of inventors, scientific researchers and science teachers. Astronomy, Chemistry, mathematics, medicine, physics and botany with their material benefits of more or less application in the field of industrial production, began to replacedogmatic theology, moral theology, church history, biblical exegesis and liturgical studies”¹⁸. In short, the growth of science and the application of science reduced man’s dependence on religion and the divine interpretation of the universe.

Secularisation brings changes in the religio-cultural and socio-political sphere of state and society. From the above discussion two important things can be inferred:

1. Firstly secularisation emerged from the ruins of European Christendom. From the ruins of Christendom emerged the national states. Therefore modern states are nation states as well as secular states.

2. Secondly the enlightenment has played an important role in challenging the supremacy of the church and Christianity in explaining the physical world. Development of science was part of the enlightenment project in the west. As Jonathan Israel explains “the enlightenment marks the most dramatic step towards secularisation and rationalisation in Europe’s history.....the Enlightenment not only attacked and severed the roots of traditional European culture in the sacred, magic, kinship and hierarchy, secularising all institutions and ideas, but (intellectually and to a degree in practice) effectively demolished all legitimation of monarchy, aristocracy, women’s subordination, ecclesiastical authority and slavery, replacing them with the principles of *universality, equality and democracy*”¹⁹. The Enlightenment in Europe heralded a new era where Reason rather than religion, became the guiding factor for all aspects of human life. Secular concerns, it came to be argued, are of this world, and religion which is concerned with the unknown world was to be kept away from this. However, this did not necessarily imply a hostile relationship between the two, only that both are exclusive.

If the understanding of secularism and secularisation in the west stands for the development of nation states, secularisation of the church and the religion, the significant decline in religion in all spheres of life and the rise of science, then we have to relook into the development of secularism in India and not reject the secularism just because it emerged in the west. The conceptualisation of secularism as a separation of religion is as much as the conceptualisation of the socio-political transformation. The separation of religion and social reality are ‘products of development related to industrialisation, the growth of the nation-state, nationalism and modern science’²⁰.

Critics of Indian secularism without highlighting the importance of the social transformation in the secular formation of nation-states over emphasise its western roots. For them Indian are highly religious and therefore it is futile to make efforts to separate religion from their life. Moreover they argue that the state is involved in the maintenance of temple boards and wakfs which prevents the state in maintaining equidistance from religion. It is the marginalisation of religion by regulating and controlling religious liberty through various regulations which gives rise to communalism. The non existence of religious institution like Church in India has further fuelled the efficacy of practising secularism in India. Nevertheless the debate on secularism in India has largely been ahistorical. Taking insights from the recent understanding on secularism and secularisation we have to contextualise secularism in India instead of out rightly rejecting it as a western concept. It has been noted by many that imposition of western secularism on India is historically incorrect. Though secularism derives its meaning and content from the church state conflict it cannot be confined to that single episode of history. Hence examining the relevance of secularism in India should not be reduced to the experiences of the Christian church.

Despite India constitutionally upholding secularism, abolition of untouchability and passage of laws protecting civil rights, violation of economic, social, civil and political rights of religious minorities as well as lower caste Hindus have increased many fold. The state's enforcement of laws protecting their rights has failed miserably. Most of the religious minorities are converts from the lower castes. The lower castes born into a hierarchical system suffer from the burden of caste and class.

The rise in communal politics and communal riots in India has occasioned considerable attention from social scientists and individuals from all walks of life. Here communalism is seen as the politics of India's two largest religious communities – the Hindus and the Muslims. Coupled with the Hindu-Muslim communal politics and violence one can evidently notice violent atrocities unleashed on other sections of society. Among the exploited communities the lower

castes or dalits face innumerable difficulties in leading a normal life. Ironically they all belong to the majority Hindu religion of India. Focusing on the religious strife between Hindus and Muslims has been the predominant concern of academicians. One can notice strikingly the lack of concern by the same social scientist and citizens on the question of caste system, caste atrocities and caste conflict. More importantly the degree of scholarly attention is absolutely negligent in looking at the religious and caste strife holistically. Micro studies and fragmented analysis is the hall mark of social science research. For all the sophistication in the scholarship of theorization of communalism as political expression of religious conflict fails to provide a compelling account of the state sponsored violence and state participation in the anti -dalit, anti-minority and anti-tribal atrocities and violence unleashed against other marginalized sections of the society. Studies on religious violence in particular have many weaknesses. Firstly the violence unleashed on lower castes, tribals and religious communities other than Muslims is downplayed. Secondly little attention is given to the evolution/construction of state and religion under colonialism. The efforts of theorising socio-religious conflicts are limited to post independent India without locating its historical roots. Thirdly little weight is granted to the multiplicity of rituals, beliefs, sects and cults with the majority Hindu religion. Fourthly they miss the profound role of the state especially judiciary in defining the constitution of caste, religions and the contents of secular practices. Lastly the colonially constructed religious communities are taken for granted as political communities. These weaknesses are inter-related stemming ultimately from the conception of Hindu religious community as a homogeneous community which influence the content of homogeneity without emphasizing the heterogeneous elements within Hinduism.

Amid the communal crisis of Ayodhya, the role of the state in defining, articulating the contents of Hindu religion has moved from the periphery to the centre of political debate. Until recently most of the discussions have focused on the religious roots of political community, lower caste mobilization as foot soldiers, religious intolerance, lack of public space in articulating religion so on and so forth. The relationship between communal politics and the sharp rise in caste atrocities by contrast has been notable for its absence. This has started to

change. The past few years have brought out many prominent books and articles on linking communalism and caste system. These valuable works suggest that communal politics and state apparatus have played a more central role in the rise of communal and caste atrocities. They have begun to investigate the previously neglected link between growing communal violence to the caste system and the action of state/public officials. Yet the works are not complete but they rightly depart from the standard practice of analyzing communalism as Hindu-Muslim problem and have produced political analysis of the religion, economic and social roots of rising communal violence. Yet their analysis in large part is confined to narrow analysis that embodies post independent feature of communalism. Dilip Menon has aptly summarised the social scientist's refusal to integrate caste and communal violence in India. He says, "there has been a reluctance to engage with what is arguably an intimate relation between the discourses of caste, secularism and communalism. That Hinduism – as religion, social system or way of life – is a hierarchical, inequalitarian structure is largely accepted, but what has gone almost unacknowledged in academic discourse is both the casual brutality and the organised violence that it practises towards its subordinated sections. What we need to explore is the inner violence within Hinduism as much as the violence directed outwards against Muslims, and acknowledge that the former is historically prior. The question needs to be: how has the deployment of violence against an internal Other (defined in terms of inherent inequality), the dalit, been displaced as one of aggression against an external Other (defined in terms on inherent difference), the Muslim. Is communalism then a deflection of the central issue of violence and inequalitarianism within the Hindu religion?"²¹

The caste system, with its societal stratification and social restrictions, continues to have a major impact on the socio-political fabric of the country. Though this hierarchical system is generally identified with Hinduism, it is also prevalent among Christians, Sikhs and Muslims. There is an attempt to delink caste from religion. Caste ties are at the heart of Hindu religion and society. Varna refers to scriptural description of an ideal fourfold social organization - Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisyas and Shudras. Jatis are local groups and locally

ordered hierarchy. Religious values, purity and pollution are deeply embedded in Caste system. Dalits continue to face social discrimination and exclusion and are targets of communal violence. Assault, rape and murder of Dalits by the upper castes are common and yet, frequently these crimes are not investigated and punished by the authorities, despite laws and protection provided by the Indian state. The Khairlanji massacre is one of the recent episodes. While many legal statutes-exist, their implementation leaves much to be desired.

Communalism in India is inherently related to the existence of caste which is a concrete reality. The caste system being primarily a division of society based on birth and occupation formed the criteria of hierarchy. In this sense it appears as a system of production relation. But resting with this description of caste would allow for conclusion that would control the essential feature of the caste system. The practice of caste system was over laid by an ideological system which prescribed the rules, norms and values of caste system. This system with all sacralizing elements formed the Hindu religion. The important method of maintaining the caste system was denying access to religion rigidly according to the caste status. This could be effective if religion was maintained as the dominant force in society and had complete hold on the people. Thus invincibility of the caste system ensured that a subtle equation was rendered in the traditional order which was subordinated to culture as the source of power. Added to this, it was a different form of power that operated in a society where culture or religion was the dominant determinant of social organisation and simultaneously prescribed the station and life style of the people, different from that implied by economic inequality or political coercion.

CASTE, RELIGION AND THE STATE

(Caste, religion and the state are the combination of the concepts that are used to analyse secularism in India. The relation between religion and caste and religion and state is a major dilemma facing social science research. The social system was based on the Varnashrama Dharma. Emphasis was put on purity of

castes by means of restrictions on marriages and inter-dining. The four castes were required to perform certain duties. The Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas were all required to study, make sacrifices and give charity. Brahmanas in particular were required to teach, perform sacrifices and receive gifts. The Kshatriyas were required to protect all others, run the administration on the dharmic lines, support the learned brahmanas, non-brahmana ascetics. The Vaisyas were required to cultivate land, carry on trade and domesticate animals. The Shudras were required to be humble and serve all the higher castes. This theoretical model of Varna system differed from the actual existence of different castes/jatis. Making a distinction between Varna and jati Andre Beteille writes, 'varna refers to a scheme of or conceptual model which divides Hindu society into four categories or orders which are arranged in a hierarchy. The Varna hierarchy is the same throughout the country and has remained so for roughly two and a half millennia. Jatis on the other hand are real social divisions, the groups by which people identify each other in everyday life'²². This hierarchy was legitimised by religion and informed the state in their duty of upholding religious values, ethics, guided the rulers in formulating policies and influencing the political process. The relationship between state and religion has been complex and circumstances affecting both with varying degrees. Social scientists have always tried to look at caste in isolation- as an appendage of the social system. Religious sanction to the hierarchical order is yet to become a part and parcel of the academic discourses.

The ideas and values that are embedded in these concepts have influenced in shaping the nature of secularism in India. Religion and caste are combination of concepts, ideas and values that have influenced the socio-political events of the sub-continent. Throughout the history of India Vedic Brahmanism in ancient times and Hinduism in modern times has been a powerful and influencing force in the formation and functions of the state. Though the degree of influence varied at different point of history, one cannot discard the over arching role of Hinduism in influencing state policies and maintaining social structures.

States in India have generally failed in discarding the role of caste in politics and policy making. Religion had tremendous influence in India. The Hindu religion in India has played a significant role in ordering the society specifying the role of the state and government upholding a particular social order. Religiously sanctioned social order and the state's role in upholding it was inseparably intertwined. As Jayaram says: "It is well known that traditionally the ideology justifying the caste system came from such Hindu scriptures and law books as the Bhagavadgita and Dharmasastras. Both the cognitive categories of jatis (large scale endogamous descent groups) and varnas (ranked classification of jatis) on the one hand, and the associated concepts of jathidharma and varnadharma (the religiously ordained duties for the jati and varna members) on the other, were defined and interpreted in terms the theological doctrines of Hinduism. So much so that Hinduism and the caste system came to be regarded as inextricably intertwined"²³. The social hierarchy and religious hierarchy coincided to maintain the brahminical supremacy. M.N. Srinivas succinctly puts the socio-religious character of caste. He says, "Caste is undoubtedly an all-India phenomena in the sense that there are everywhere hereditary, endogamous groups which form a hierarchy. Everywhere there are Brahmins, untouchables and peasant, artisan, trading and service castes. Relations between castes are invariably expressed in terms of pollution and purity. Certain Hindu theological ideas such as *samskaras*, *karma* and *dharma* are woven into the caste system and the ordering of different varnas is clearly intended to support the theory of Brahminical supremacy"²⁴.

The impetus for such an analysis has become more important because a veiled analysis is in vogue delinking the relationship between caste and religion on the one hand and on the other well meaning social scientists have started seeing caste as an answer to the problem of state violence and communalism. A well known leftist has this to say on caste system: "The much reviled caste system has played a very significant role in making Indian democracy vibrant by making it possible for people to offer a good measure of resistance to centralised,

authoritarian power structures that came to be imposed during colonial rule and were preserved even after Independence. They have also forced a certain amount of redistribution of power through the democratic process”²⁵. Caste oppression continues to be a feature of Indian society. Caste continues to be an important factor in social turmoil and conflict. The dalits have been organising themselves. But their resistance is no match for the state violence and upper caste oppression. Frequent clashes break out over land, women, use of public tanks and toilets, temple entry etc. In most of the cases bureaucracy has been non co-operative and police have always taken an antagonistic stance. One can notice the strong presence of the police after the atrocities have been committed which appears to prevent the lower caste from striking back rather than to maintain order. The lower caste movements were not movements which liked to identify themselves with their identity. It was a movement to break away from the dreaded caste structures. Attempts to see compatibility between caste and democracy by social scientists have been refuted long ago. K.M. Pannikar remarks on caste and democracy: “Democracy and cast are totally opposed... the one is based on equality, and the other on inequality of birth. The one is actuated by the principle of social inclusion, the other by principle of social exclusion. Democracy tries to break down the barriers of class, caste seeks to perpetuate them. Democracy imparts universal education in order that class consciousness might vanish, caste refuses education except to the governing classes. In all matters that are of importance, caste and democracy are fundamentally opposed, they are at their very bases, incompatible”²⁶.

Varna ideology and caste structurally constitute the political, social and economic spheres. Franco and Sherry Chand has explained that the basis of social practice in India is Varna ideology²⁷. With the help of conceptual tools developed by recent studies on ideology the authors seeks to understand the functioning of caste by tracing it in the religious traditions. Varna ideology is the ideology which perpetuate domination. ‘It constitutes the upper castes (*Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas* in the past, *Vaishyas* now) as subjects by giving them images

of their own superiority and instilling in them a contempt for the rest'. The inculcation of varna ideology begins in the 'family where child hears and learns typical words and expressions, observes and imitates gestures'. This ideology is stressed in schools and colleges and it further strengthened by the upper castes who have monopolised 'professional, administrative and commercial jobs'. Simultaneously the varna ideology inculcates the lower castes to be obedient and subservient. The true nature of varna ideology is to provide 'meaning to all members of a social group by actually removing true meaning from the lives of many. By legitimizing oppression, it makes for social cohesiveness and, thus, perpetuates an unjust and oppressive structure'²⁸. Similarly Barbara Harris has explained how India's economy is regulated by caste²⁹. The general conclusion that caste is gradually declining in urban areas has been strongly refuted by Harris. She says 'Caste is the strongest trade union'. Caste has become an important factor in organising local economy. Larger part of the Indian Economy according to Harris is regulated by social institutions. Social institutions express forms of power not confined to the economy. Macro-economic policy is implemented through their filters. The roles of gender, religious plurality, caste, space, class and the state are introduced to explain India's socially regulated economy.

The social structure strongly influences the nature of the state. The concept of state commonly refers to either the present state of a system, or to a governed entity or sub-entity, such as a nation or province. Development of state occupies central place in our understanding of secularism. Discussion of secularism is incomplete without reference to the state. State touches every aspect of human life. State is not just a reference to a definite territory and people but it refers to a unity of legal and political authority. It is vested with the legal power of using force. State is found in the institutions which make laws and implement or enforce them i.e. in the legislature, executive and judiciary. The executive branch consists of bureaucratic institutions. It enforces its legitimacy when challenged through the military and the police. All these institutions put together

is called the state and the power of the state flows through their institutions. In the words of Ralph Miliband, “the state is not a thing... ‘the state’ stands for ..a number of particular institutions which, together, constitute its reality, and which interact as parts of what may be called the state system”³⁰. The set of institutions that make the state are the government, the administration, the military and the police, the judicial branch, sub central government and parliamentary assemblies. According to Neera Chandhoke “the state properly conceived is rather a set of administrative, policing and military organizations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organizations.... Moreover, coercive and administrative organizations are only parts of overall political systems. These systems also may contain institutions through which social interests are represented in state policy-making as well as institutions through which non-state actors are mobilised to participate in policy implementation. Nevertheless, the administrative and coercive organisations are the basis of state power”³¹.

The modern Indian state that has developed during our times is a continuation of the colonial state. An Indian State has been officially defined as any State in India under the protection or political control of the British Crown or of which the Government has acknowledged its supremacy. Whereas no such state existed in India in 1774, by 1858 all the States of India had come to occupy the position defined above. The emergence of pan-Indian state was an important stage in the development of the state in India. India inherited a hierarchical social order as well as a great ethnic and cultural diversity. The policy of the British was not to interfere in India’s social life. Linguistic diversity was another important ingredient of Indian society. There were more than a thousand languages and the national language Hindi was spoken by not more than 30% of the population. There were differences in religious beliefs, social organisation and customs. Together there were substantial religious minorities. The Muslims and other religious communities like Sikhs, the Jains, the Buddhists, the

Parsees, the Christians and the tribals constituted a substantial percentage of the -population.

States that have developed in modern times are known as Nation-state. Nation states in the west emerged against the concept of church state where church was able to provide a centralised authority and order in the medieval age of feudalism. Basically state is a political organisation. State may or may not co-exist with different nationality. The dominant political formation is the Nation-state where state is predominantly composed of one nationality. If a state consists of more than one nationality or the nationality is spread over different states then nation and state do not coincide. In a state that has been formed with multiple nationalities one particular nationality gets precedence over other nationalities. Nation and nationality are cultural and ethnic terms. Renan says, "What constitutes a nation is not speaking the same tongue or belonging to the same ethnic group, but having accomplished great things in common in the past and the wish to accomplish them in the future"³². Factors which make a people a nationality are geographical unity, common racial stock, common culture, common language, religious customs, and traditions, common history, common economic interests and political associations, common hopes and aspirations. The growth of modern states was nation states as well as secular states. As Karl Dobbelaere says 'secularism can be practised only in a nation state'³³. Various factors led to the rise of nation states. Reformation and renaissance in the 16th and 17th century, reason instead of faith becoming the basis of social thinking, development of science and technology and more importantly the emerging middle class struggle against feudal class all played progressive role in established secular nation states. These movements emphasised science in place of religion, reason instead of faith, progress in place of salvation, urbanisation in place to village-based life, equality by birth instead of aristocratic order and this world was given importance rather than 'that world'.

It would be misleading to begin our analysis of secularism in India with the establishment of an independent state after the turbulent events of 1947. The framing of a liberal constitution incorporating religious freedom as a fundamental

right and insertion of 'secular' into the preamble by the forty second amendment is highlighted as the secular character of the Indian state. To understand the nature of secular state in India one has to look back at the rise of modern state structures and the growth of Hinduism under colonialism. The best entry point of understanding secularism in India would be in locating the growth of colonial state employing the natives and the oriental-pundit construction of Hinduism.

OBJECTIVES

- This study explores the notion that secularism is a western concept hence irrelevant to Indian conditions. An effort is made to show that secularism in the west is not limited to the conflict between state and the church. Social transformation, egalitarianism, secularisation and formation of nation states triggered by reformation, renaissance and industrialisation constitute secularism.
- ~~This study~~ Analysing crisis of secularism as a post independent phenomenon not only limits our understanding of secularism but is also ahistorical. This study traces secularism in the rise of modern state and construction of religious identities.
- This study locates the conflict between the secular and the sacred not in the conflict between the state and religion but in the conflict between politically empowered socially dominant groups unified under the colonial structures and the disempowered, oppressed fragmented lower caste groups.
- The study shows that along with the national movement their emerged social movements challenging the antiquated social structure, traditional customs, practices and restrictions.
- The objective of this research is to contextualise secularism in the egalitarian social movements. If anti-feudal and anti-church constituted secularisation in the west, the anti-caste movements like non-Brahmin movement, Namasudra movement, SNDP and Satyashodak Samaj led by pioneering leaders like Jyothiba Phule, Sri Narayan Guru, E.V.Ramaswami Naicker, B.R. Ambedkar

etc spreading the message of reason, rationality, equality and egalitarianism constitutes secularisation in India.

METHODOLOGY

It has become imperative to understand the development of state as a complex social process instead of concentrating on the constitution, laws and political institutions. The social structure shapes political institution and organisations and in turn it affects the society resulting in multiple phenomena like economic equality, social unrest, gender bias, state violence and war. Historical sociology as a branch of sociology has been focusing on how societies have evolved in history. A significant body of writing on the emergence and development of state is dealt in the field of historical sociology. Situating the development of state within modernity scholars have looked into the emergence of modern state in socio-political transformations. Contemporary historical sociology has been looking at the development of state since historically in relationship to classes, economic and political system.

This study focuses on the intersection between religion and the state. It is primarily based on the analysis on the question of hierarchical caste structure. Anti-secularists have been predicting the decline of secularism. Juxtaposing secularism and communalism has been mainstream writings on secularism. Hence Chapter I provide a discussion of communalism and secularism. It looks at the limitations of juxtaposing secularism and communalism in understanding social conflicts.

The general tendency among social scientists is to look at secularism in the west with suspicion. Understanding the trends in western secularism has become a necessity to proceed to our analysis on Indian secularism. Chapter II examines the development and notion of secularism as it emerged in the west. This chapter analyses the multiple changes that transformed west European society from Christendom to nation states. The forces that paved the way for the emergence of secularism are examined.

States evolve over a period of time. Modern states are a product of social revolution. Constitutional rule has been the take off point to understand state in India. To understand the nature of Indian state Chapter III examines several factors like social, political and religious changes that India underwent during the long colonial rule. In contrast to European state breaking from Christendom this chapter sees the unification of fragmentary states into one state unified by modern bureaucracy, army, police, transport and communication. This chapter critically look at the colonial intervention and analyse the consequences to Indian society and polity.

Chapter IV focuses on the articulators and practitioners of religion and secondly their responses to inegalitarian system. A general survey of scriptural notions to hierarchical system is undertaken. Taking off from the orientalist construction of Hinduism religious revivalist in India rearticulated Hindu religion. The agenda and response of the reformers and revivalist to the hierarchical order are analysed.

Nationalism was one of the powerful secularising movements in history. In a multi religious society with hierarchical social structures nationalism had to encounter religious conflicts and egalitarian thrust. Chapter V analyses the responses of the nationalists in general and Gandhi in particular. Secularism is concerned with secularisation of society. The way Gandhi and the nationalists responded to the twin question of caste and communal harmony is examined.

One of the major criticisms of the critiques of secularism in India is that the secularism as a division of secular and the sacred is non-existent in India. Rejecting without contextualising has been the thrust of anti-secularist explanation of secularism in India. Secularism and secularisation has been theorised as the decline of the traditional social order. In light of this Chapter V deals with the anti caste movements. A brief survey of the ideas and content of anti caste leaders are made. Secularisation as a process resulting in diminishing role of religion in India is contextualised in the anti-hierarchical movements.

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CHAPTER - I

DEBATES ON COMMUNALISM AND SECULARISM

Multiple religious beliefs and practices without any common texts or a historical founder deny the existence of homogenous religious communities. The majority of the Hindus are diversified by language, beliefs, rituals, customs and practices. Further there is the division based on purity and pollution. This has led to defining Hindu religious community not on any common texts, rituals or deities but on the basis of exclusion of minority religious communities. As such the majority community has been articulated as the largest political community. Synonymously locating religious community in political community has been the bed rock of academic analysis, theorization, and journalistic writing etc about group and ethnic conflict in India. Communalism in its various manifestation – communal ideology, communal riots, communal policies, communal practices etc has attracted the attention of the scholars in India as well as outside in understanding the politics in India. An offshoot of this theorization has been secularism. In pre-independence India nationalism was the counter ideology of communalism. The pre-independent nationalism has transformed itself into secularism in post independent India¹. The binary to understand pre-independent politics is nationalism and communalism and post independent India is secularism and communalism. Religion embedded nationalism and religion denying secularism are the contrasting binaries to look at the rise in communalism and the problem of secularism. Except for few individuals and organizations who out rightly reject the concept of secularism, generally individuals, citizens, organizations and political parties seek solution for the problem of communalism in secularism. Hence a discussion on secularism preceded by an analysis on communalism will be meaningful.

DISCOURSES ON COMMUNALISM

Most analyses on the history of communalism in India are conducted by juxtaposing binary categories: nationalism as absolute, unified, secular, true consciousness, hence progressive and communalism as parochial, disintegrative, religion oriented and hence reactionary². These categories are then injected into different organizations to determine their national or communal or progressive or reactionary nature. The success or failures attributed to the different organizations are linked to the contrived distinction between nationalism and communalism. The Indian National Congress with anti colonial ideology successfully replacing the British is seen as the true embodiment of nationalism. On the other hand, Muslim League which pressed for the creation of a separate state of Pakistan on the basis of religious community, and the Hindu Mahasabha with its religion oriented politics that directly antagonized Muslims are seen as the torch bearers of communalism.

An assumption that nationalism and communalism dichotomy is a conceited contravention which is instrumental for the consolidation of a particular political structure and for defining an appropriately restrictive discourse can facilitate a proper and full understanding of communalism in India. For this purpose further dichotomies and oppositions, obscured by this contrived dichotomy should be brought out and shown as being related to the purport of communalism.

It is conceded by everyone that Hindu religion is plural. It has multiple languages, multiple idols for worship, multiple rituals and practices and multiple ethnicities. Within the diversity one common factor is the structure of caste. Assimilating the diverse communities and caste structure is identified under the rubric 'Hindu'. Described this way the efforts of the BJP, VHP and RSS combine, is an attempt at creating a pan-Indian Hindu identity. The anti-Muslim rhetoric with political mobilization bears an uncanny resemblance to the homogeneous Hindu community. But the fact of the matter is that the new political order that communal ideology inaugurated has exposed the hopelessly archaic character of communal identities.

Theorization of communalism in India has been a historical narrative of the politics of Hindus and Muslims. The anti-dalit dimensions are generally ignored. Sporadic comments about the internal caste contradictions and the anti-minority ideology of communalism can be founded³. Communalism is an attempt to maintain status quo in society and not allow the kind of change which will accommodate the aspirations of those who are deprived of resources and status, namely, the lower castes and the lower classes⁴. The recent revival and intensification of Hindu communalism is also indirectly linked with the politicization of the Harijans⁵ and in the name of Hinduism, the RSS plans to revive the old feudal values, social discrimination and varna system and wants that those who resisted these values should surrender their independence and submit to old Brahminical discriminatory varna system⁶.

The term communalism has acquired varied meanings and locates its emergence and crystallization at different points of history. According to Pandey “in its common Indian usage the word “communalism” refers to a condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between members of different religious communities. In academic investigations, more often than not, the term is applied to organized political movements based on the proclaimed interests of a religious community, usually in response to a real or imagined threat from another religious community (or communities)⁷. Locating in the colonial discourses of imperialism and nationalism Pandey finds ‘Communalism...is a form of colonialist knowledge’⁸. Labeling religious and sectarian conflicts as communalism imperial administrators implied that Indian society was fundamentally religious and imbued with bigotry and irrationality.

Bipan Chandra regards communal discontent and antagonism as the product of elite manipulation. He argues that religious difference was used “to mask the politics of classes and social groups arising in the secular, non religious spheres”⁹. He defines communalism as “the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion they have, as a result, common social, political and economic interest”¹⁰. Making a distinction between “religiosity” which is bad, and “religion”,

which is good, Bipan Chandra defines religiosity as “deep and intense emotional commitment to matters of religion and as the tendency to let religion and religious emotions intrude into non-religious or non-spiritual areas of life and beyond the individual’s private life, to refuse to separate religion from politics, economics and social life – that is, to be over-religious or to have too much religion in one’s life”¹¹.

Prof. Randhir Singh has strongly criticized Bipan Chandra’s position. He points out an Ideological error and methodological limitation in Bipan Chandra’s work. The ideological error lies in understanding communalism from the standpoint of nationalism, which locates imperialism as the primary source of all our problems, including those relating to communalism, and thus obscures all the important distinction between the essentially indigenous creation of most of these problems and imperialism’s contribution to and taking advantage of these for its own ends. At the methodological level, contemporary communalism is studied in an empiricist and often ahistorical manner which fails to see complex character of communalism and its underlying interconnection with the larger social reality¹². On the other hand, the important Marxist approach to the study of communalism is defined in Randhir Singh’s “Theorizing Communalism in India.” According to him ‘communalism in contemporary India as ideology and practice is above all an aspect of the politics of the ruling classes in a society with a massive feudal—colonial inheritance, deep religious divisions, and undergoing its own historically specific form of capitalist development’¹³. Critical of existing approaches and especially, those which juxtapose nationalism as an alternative to communalism, Randhir Singh views nationalism as a reactionary force in post-independent India. Indian nationalism, he argues, is increasingly identified with Hindu chauvinism, dharmkta has become useful for the ruling classes, particularly Congress (I) as the major political formation of the ruling classes, to reinforce their hegemony and to accept the unjust and inequitable social order¹⁴.

Prabha Dixit sees communalism as a political phenomena. It is basically a political doctrine which make use of religio-cultural differences to achieve political

ends. She observes that communalism is not a natural outcome of religious and social-cultural differences; it arises out of the deliberate choice made by a people to use these differences to achieve some political end. This deliberate choice by community for political demands on the basis of religio-cultural difference that communal awareness turns into communalism in the form of political doctrine¹⁵.

Apart from seeing communalism arising out of religious differences, social scientists like Asghar Ali Engineer and Moin Shakir see it in terms of class conflict. Communalism is fundamentally a political and socio-economic phenomenon, religion being only an instrument of political and socio-economic interest, as and when it suits them¹⁶. The inequitable development according to Engineer, gives importance to the primordial identity of caste, community and region lagging behind the race and they become more assertive through their primordial identity. The tension builds because the benefitted caste and community becomes more aggressive to protect their privileges¹⁷. Moin Shakir also maintains that communal roots are in the socio-economic order. He says that 'if the economic and social policies of the system lead to concentration of power and deny equality of opportunity to overwhelming majority of the people, belonging to all communities, discord and disharmony are inevitable. In such a system ruling class has a vested interest in dividing the people along communal and religious lines¹⁸.

If scholars like Bipin Chandra to Asghar Ali Engineer see a crucial role of religion in communalism, Ashish Nandy says the roots of intolerance and Communalism are inherent in the language of modernity in general and nation-state system in particular. He regards secularism as basically a western concept and comes in a larger package of progress, modernity and homogenising trend entrenched in the modern-state legitimised through nation security, development, modern science and technology¹⁹. Much of the fanaticism and violence associated with religion, according to Nandy, '.....comes from the sense of defeat of the believers, from their feeling of importance and from their free floating anger and self-hatred while facing a world which is secular and desacralized'²⁰. He argues that ancient tradition was absolutely flawless, and is the symbol of human dignity,

authenticity and sanctity of human life. Therefore the defence of human dignity according to him requires the defence of primordialism²¹ .

Prakash Chandra Upadhyaya has criticised Nandy's position as communal²². He sees no difference between Nandy's position and that of RSS Hindu modernists like Balasaheb Deoras. Upadhaya argues that, though Nandy and Deroas have their differing standpoints, both are one in their dismissal of Indian state, secularism, the only difference being that whereas for Nandy, Indian state secularists are equally oppressive to all religious communities, Balasaheb holds them responsible for being essentially anti-Hindu²³. 'One can argue that despite their difference with Hindu modernists like RSS, scholars such as Ashish Nandy provide them with a sophisticated intellectual justification' observes Upadhyaya²⁴. He maintains that indian secularism never divorced from majoritarian politics and is constructed around the traditionalist idioms of the majority Hindu community²⁵.

Though one can notice different strands on communalism, the ongoing debate on communalism in post-independent India has not left its colonial hangover. This is because most of the studies on communalism are ahistorical and see a break in '1947' which unfortunately hides the major contradictions in Indian society relating to caste oppression and view communalism as anathema to nationalism. The real nature of Indian nationalism is never discussed. This has only helped the Hindu nationalist to co-opt historical figures for present day politics when they do not fit in their politics²⁶. Moreover the analysis on communalism take for granted many things which is contrary to the social reality. The limitations in the theorization of communalism is because it basically sees communalism as the problem between two dominant religious communities.

Communalism in its different manifestation in recurring communal riots, use of history for present day politics, political recruitment of Ram, secular parties succumbing and colluding with Hindu communalism, juxtaposing nationalism or secularism to communalism, are basically seen within the paradigm of Hindu Muslim conflict. To accept this framework of Hindu-Muslim dichotomy is not only to grant what the communalism are yet to achieve, the creation of

homogenous Hindu community, but also to presume that there exist pan-Indian homogenous Hindu and Muslim communities based on religion unifying the masses cutting across caste, linguistic and ethnic, barriers which is an erroneous presumption.

The identity of Hindu and Muslim were actually devised by British for describing the communities entrenched within a geographical entity²⁷. The Cultural unification which many scholars refer is limited to the twice born castes who got homogenised and nationalised during the colonial rule. T.K. Oomen says Hinduism 'was magnified through 'assimilative communalism'²⁸.

The majority religious community is defined by including scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and clubbing Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs as Hindus. "...It is wrong to think of Hindus as a majority except that it is being thought like that of late and that is what causing the problem" observes Rajni Kothari²⁹. Hindu community is internally highly structured, diverse and pluralistic. Dalits, Tribals and ethnic groups constitute minorities against whom the state has let loose repression and denied basic civil rights³⁰. Not taking into account the linguistic diversities, atrocities committed on the lower orders of the Hindu community and presuming cultural unity have only strengthened the communal forces.

SECULAR DEBATES IN INDIA

The question concerning the conceptual utility of secularism by which the major problem of inter religious strife can be addressed has aroused great interest and vivid discussion amongst scholars. The consensus among scholars in a multi religious society like India seemed to vote for secularism as religious harmony. The general opinion of the sociologist, the political scientist, the economist and other concerned scholars on the nature and relevance of secularism in India is to locate the roots of secularism in western political formations – conflict between the state and the church, king and the pope and separation of state and religion, politics and religion with a major thrust on the notion of separation of religion and politics, secondly secularism has to be redefined and

contextualized to Indian conditions. Debates on secularism are so diverse that it has become a highly contested concept. Out rightly rejecting secularism as a western concept, hence irrelevant to India, declaring secularism as dead, personally declaring one as anti secularist to locating secularism within religion, can be noted.

CONSTITUTIONAL SECULARISM

The dominant understanding of secularism in India is *sarva dharma sambhava* – equal respect for all religions. The forty second amendment incorporated the term ‘secularism’ to the preamble of the constitution. Understanding secularism as respect for all religions and the state declaring itself as secular does not mean that a wall of separation has been established between religion and politics. Emphasis on various provisions embodied in the constitution has been the discourse on secularism within the parameters of constitutional law. Provisions related to the equal rights, religious freedom incorporated in the constitution are highlighted. The Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution guarantee certain secular and religious rights as well as protection against discrimination.

Article 14 speaks of “equality before law and equal protection of the laws. It says “the state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the law within the territory of India”. This right is guaranteed to any person within the territory of India and available to citizens and non-citizens. Under this Article two expressions have been used 1. Equality before law and, 2. Equal protection of the laws. Equality before law implies absence of any privilege by reason of birth, creed or the like in favor of any individual, and also the equal subject of all individuals and classes to the ordinary law of the land. Equality before law is an aspect of what Dicey calls the Rule of Law. It means that no man is above the law and that every person, whatever be his rank or conditions, is subject to the jurisdiction of ordinary courts. Equal Protection of the laws implies equality of treatment in equal circumstances, i.e., equal protection, of all alike in the same situation and under like circumstances. It means that all persons in similar circumstances shall be treated alike both in

privileges conferred and liabilities imposed. This concept implies equality for equals and aims at striking down hostile discrimination or oppression of inequality. It aims to protect persons similarly placed against discriminatory treatment.

ARTICLE 15 states Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of Religion, Race, Caste, Sex or Place of Birth. Article 15(1) provides that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. It prohibits the State to make discrimination on any of these grounds. This provision is against the state and not against the private individuals. This right is available only to the citizens. Article 15(2) provides that no citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race caste, sex, place of birth or any of them be subject to any disability, restriction or condition with regard to (a) Access to shops, public restaurant, hotels and place of public entertainment; (b) The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of the state funds or dedicated to the use of general public. It prohibits both state and private individuals from making any discrimination. The object of this article is to eradicate the abuse of the Hindu social system and to herald a united nation. No law, custom or usage could authorize any person to prevent any Harijans, depressed classes or the like from having access to the public places.

An important meaning of secularism is that there is no state religion. It observes neutrality and impartiality towards all religions. Individuals are free to practise the religion of their choice. The Constitution declares India as a Secular State. The concept of secularism is implicit in the preamble of the Constitution, which declares the resolve of the people to secure to all its citizens “liberty of thought, belief, faith, and worship”. The 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, has inserted the word ‘Secular’ in the Preamble. In India, a Secular State was never considered a an irreligious or atheistic State. It only means that in matters of religion it is neutral. State protects all religions but interferes with none.

Explaining the secular character of the Indian constitution the Supreme Court said,

1. There is no mysticism in the secular character of the State.
2. Secularism is neither anti-God nor pro-God, it treats alike the devout, the antagonistic and the atheist. It eliminates God from the matters of the State and ensures that no one shall be discriminated against on the ground of religion
3. The State shall have no religion of its own. It should treat all religions equally. The state must extend similar treatment to the Church, the Mosque and the Temple. In a Secular State, the State is only concerned with the relation between man and man. It is not concerned with the relation of man with god. It is left to the individual's conscience. Every man should be allowed to go to Heaven in his own way. Worshipping God should be according to the dictates of one's own conscience.
4. Man is not answerable to the State for the variety of his religious views
5. The right to worship was granted by God for man to worship as he pleased. There can be no compulsion in law of any creed or practice of any form of worship.

In *M. Ismail Faruqui v. Union of India* (Ayodhya case) the Supreme Court, after a detailed discussion has summarized the true concept of secularism under the constitution as follows.

“It is clear from the Constitutional scheme that it guarantees equality in the matter of all individuals and groups irrespective of their faith emphasizing that there is no religion of the State itself. The Preamble of the Constitution read in particular with Article 25 to 28 emphasizes this aspect and indicates that it is in this manner the concept of secular as it is embodied in the Constitutional scheme as a creed adopted by the Indian people has to be understood while examining the Constitutional validity of any legislation. The concept of secularism is one facet of the right to equality woven as the central golden thread in fabric depicting the pattern of the scheme in our Constitution”³¹.

Article 25 Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion

- (1) Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.
- (2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law
 - (a) Regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice;
 - (b) Providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

Explanation I: The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion.

Explanation II: In sub-Clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly.

What is Religion? The term ‘religion’ is not defined in the Constitution and indeed it is a term which is hardly susceptible to any rigid definition. The Supreme Court has defined it broadly.

- Religion is a matter of faith with individuals or communities and it is not necessarily theistic.
- A religion has its basis in a “a system of beliefs or doctrines which are regarded by those who profess that religion as conducive to their spiritual well being, but it will not be correct to say that religion is nothing else but a doctrine of belief”.

- A religion may only lay down a Code of ethical rules for its followers to accept, it might prescribe rituals and observances, ceremonies and modes of worship, which are regarded as integral parts of religion, and those forms and observances might extend even to matters of food and dress.
- Every person has right not only to entertain such religious belief and ideas as may be approved by his judgment or conscience but also exhibit his belief and ideas by such overt acts, which are sanctioned by his religion.³²

Thus, under Art, 25(1) a person has two fold freedom:-

(a) Freedom of conscience

(b) Freedom, to profess, practise and propagate religion.

The freedom of 'conscience' is absolute inner freedom of the citizen to mould his own relation with God in whatever manner he likes. When this freedom becomes articulated and expressed in outward form, it is "to profess and practise religion". To 'profess' a religion means to declare freely and openly one's faith and belief. He has the right to practise his belief by practical expression in any manner he likes. To 'practise' religion is to perform the prescribed religious duties, rites and rituals, and to exhibit his religious beliefs and ideas by such acts as prescribed by religious order in which he believes. To 'propagate' means to spread and publicize his religious views for the edification of others. But the word "propagation" only indicates persuasion and exposition without any element of coercion. The right to propagate one's religion does not give a right to convert any person to one's religion. There is no fundamental right to convert any person to one's own religion.

What Article 24(1) guarantees is not right to convert another person to one's own religion, but to transmit or spread one's religion by an exposition of its tenets. The protection of Article 25 and 26 is not limited to matters of doctrine or belief. It extends to acts done in pursuance of 'religion' and, therefore, contains a guarantee for rituals and observances, ceremonies and modes of worship which are integral parts of a religion. What constitutes an

essential part of religions or religious practice has to be decided by the courts with reference to a doctrine of a particular religion and includes practices, which are regarded by the community as a part of its religion.

Restrictions on freedom of Religion.

1. Religious liberty is subject to public order, morality and health

- In the name of religion, no act can be done against Public order, morality and health of the public.
- In the name of religion “untouchability or traffic in human beings” e.g. system of Devadasis (as prevalent in South India) cannot be tolerated.
- This freedom is also subject to “other provisions of this part”, e.g. right to freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly and association, freedom to carry on a profession, trade and business. The freedom to practise religion cannot affect the exercise of this freedom by others.
- Right to propagate one’s religion does not give right to anyone to “forcibly” convert any person to one’s own religion. Forcible conversion of any person to one’s own religion might disturb the public order. Hence it could be prohibited by law.
- Dealing with the meaning of the words ‘public order’, the Court held that if a thing which disturbs the current of life of the community, and does not merely affect an individual it would amount to disturbance of the public order.

2. Regulation of economic, financial, political and secular activities associated with religious practices – Clause (2) (a) -

The provision of Article 25 shall not affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice.

- The freedom to practice extends only to those activities which are the essence of religion.
- It does not cover secular activities which do not form the essence of religion.
- An activity which is religious cannot be regulated by the State but an activity which is secular in nature can be regulated by the State.
- The activities associated with the religious practices are not religious in nature but merely economic, commercial or political in character, they may be regulated by the State. For e.g. if a religious institution own property, the management of that property may be regulated by the State.

3. Social Reform, Social Welfare and throwing open of Hindu religious institutions

- Under clause (2) (b) Article 25 is empowered to make laws for social welfare and social reform.

Thus under this clause the State can eradicate social practices and dogmas which stand in the path of the country's onward progress. Such laws do not affect the essence of any religion. This clause declares that where there is conflict between the need of social welfare and reform and religious practice, religion must yield. Under this sub – clause, the State is empowered to throw open all Hindu religious institutions of a public character, to all classes and sections of Hindus. It ensures an individual's legal right to enter into a temple unobstructed irrespective of his caste, untouchability, social inequality or under-privileged class. The right of Sikhs to wear and carry Kirpans is recognised as a religious practice in Explanation I of Article 25. This does not mean that they can keep any number of Kirpans. They are entitled to keep one sword. They cannot possess more than one Kirpans without a license.

Article 26 Freedom to manage religious affairs

Subject to public order, morality and health, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right -

- (a) to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes;
- (b) to manage its own affairs in matters of religion;
- (c) to own and acquire movable and immovable property; and
- (d) to administer such property in accordance with law.

The right guaranteed by Article 25 is an individual right while right guaranteed by Article 26 is the right of an ‘organised body’ like the religious denomination or any section thereof. ‘Religious denomination’ means a collection of individuals having common faith, common organization and designated by a distinct name. It thus indicates a religious sect or body having a common faith and organization and designated by a distinct name.

To form religious denomination, three conditions must be fulfilled

- i. It is a collection of individuals who have a system of beliefs which they regard as conducive to their spiritual well being, that is common faith.
- ii. It must have a common organization and
- iii. Collection of these individuals should have a distinct name.

In a large sense ‘Hinduism’ is a religious denomination in contradistinction to Christians and Muslims. In a limited “sense” the various philosophies governing the Hindu Society, such as Advaitas, Dwaitas, Vishistadwaitas and Saivites can also be termed as denomination. Likewise “Ananda Marga” , “Satsangis” are a religious denomination within the Hindu religion.

The right guaranteed by Article 26 to the religious denomination or a section thereof may be explained under the following headings:

(i) Right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes – Article 26(a)

- Under this clause every religious denomination has right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes.
- The words “establish and maintain” must be read together and therefore it is only those institutions which a religious denomination establishes which it can claim to maintain it.

(ii) Right to manage its own affairs in matters of religion - Article 26(b)

According to this Article, every religious denomination or any section thereof has the right to manage its own affairs in matters of religion. The State cannot interfere in these affairs, unless it exercises its right so as to interfere with public order, morality or health. Accordingly, every religious denomination or organization enjoys complete freedom in the matters of deciding what rites and ceremonies are essential according to the tenets of the religion they hold. But the Court, has the right to determine whether a particular rite or ceremony is regarded as essential by the tenets of a particular religion. The religious denomination's right to manage its own affairs is limited to the affairs in matters of religion. Secular activities with religious institutions may be regulated by State by law. – the places of worship like Temples, Mosques, Gurudwaras cannot be used for hiding criminals or carrying on anti-national activities. The state has the power under Art.25(1) and clause (2) to prohibit these activities in the places of worship. The state cannot be a passive spectator when exercise of right of religion threatens the public order, morality and health of the community. It must play a positive play and ensure maintenance of public order, health and morality in the society. 'Religion' here includes religious belief, and also the practices which are regarded as essential and integral parts of religion.

(iii) Right to own and acquire and administer property-Article 26(c) and (d)

Under clauses of (c) and (d) of Article 26 a religious denomination has the right to acquire and own property and to administer such property in accordance with law. The right to administer property owned by a religious denomination is a limited right, and it is subject to the regulatory power of the state and also any general property law. The state can acquire the property of a religious denomination to the extent it does not destroy or completely negate the religious denomination's right to own and acquire property for even the survival of the religious institution in question.

Article 27 - Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion

According to Article 27 no person shall be compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination.

This article emphasizes the secular character of the State. The public money collected by way of tax cannot be spent by the State for the promotion of any particular religion. Article 27 prohibits the imposition of tax, the proceeds of which are appropriated in payment of expense on the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination. What this Article prohibits is levying of tax and not of fee. Tax is a common burden and the only return which the taxpayer gets is a participation in the common benefits of the State. Fees are, on the other hand, payments primarily in public interest but for some special service rendered or some special work done for the benefit of those from whom the payments are demanded. State government granted money for renovation of water tank belonging to Lord Jagannath but used by the general public for bathing and drinking purposes, the Court held that it was not violative of this Article. Grant of money by the State for secular activities (e.g. cultural activities) are not prohibited by this Article. If places of worship are destroyed due to communal riots and the state grants money so as to restore these places to the pre-riot condition, it cannot be said that the State is making payment of the promotion of a particular religion or religious denomination and consequently such grant by the State will not be violative of Article 27.

Article 28 Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions.

According to Article 28(1) no religious instruction shall be imparted in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds. But this clause shall not apply to an educational institution, which is administered by the State but has been established under any endowment or trust, which requires that religious instruction shall be imparted in such institution. Under clause 1 (3) no person attending any educational institution recognized by the State or receiving aid out of State funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such institution or in any premises attached thereto unless such person or, if such person is minor, his guardian has given his consent thereto.

Article 25 states: “Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate”.

DISCOURSES ON SECULARISM

The constitutional explanation to the nature of secularism shifts from separation of religion and politics to the principle of religious toleration. For instance P.P. Gajendragadkar writes: “The state does not owe loyalty to any one particular religion as such; it is not irreligious or anti religious; it gives equal freedom for all religions and holds that the religion of the citizen has nothing to do in the matter of socio-economic problems”³³. P.K. Tripathi articulates three basic principles of Indian secularism emphasize toleration in place of neutrality (i) the principle of the primacy of the individual, who is placed above and before religion; (ii) the principle of freedom of religion and religious denominations; (iii) the principle of toleration ³⁴.

P.L. Chaudhari in his book ‘The Concept of Secularism in Indian Constitution’ writes: ‘the absence of complete separation between the state and the religion is because of the character of Indian society which is basically religious.... Separation of the state from the religion is not the basis of Indian secularism, as it is in other countries. Indian Constitution does not reject religion. On the contrary, it respects all religions’³⁵. Upendra Baxi placing considerable reliance on judiciary which made secularism an essential feature of the basic structure of the Constitution explains what secularism connotes in the Indian constitution. He says it asserts that:

- (i) the state, by itself shall not espouse or establish or practice any religion;
- (ii) public revenue will not be used to promote any religion;
- (iii) the state shall have the power to regulate any “economic, financial or other secular activity” associated with religious practice; [Article 25(2)(a) of the Constitution];

- (iv) the state shall have the power through the law to provide for “social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of public character to all classes and sections of Hindus”[Article 25(2)(b) of the Constitution];
- (v) the practice of untouchability (insofar as it may be justified by Hindu religion) is constitutionally outlawed by Article 17;
- (vi) every individual person will have, in that order under Article 25 an equal right to freedom of conscience and religion;
- (vii) these rights are however subject to the power of the state through law to impose restrictions on the ground of “public order, morality and health”.
- (viii) these rights are furthermore subject to other fundamental rights in Part III;
- (ix) the Courts, especially the Supreme Court, shall have the final ‘say’ on adjudging state action as valid or otherwise under the above principles³⁶.

D.E. Smith in his book ‘India as a Secular State’ elucidates three inter related sets of relationships concerning state, religion and the individual in understanding the principles of secular state (i) religion and the individual (freedom of religion) ; (ii) the state and the individual (citizenship); (iii) the state and religion (separation of state and religion)³⁷. The first principle embodies liberty and freedom of religion and citizenship and the second right to equality and non-discrimination. The third principle of liberal democratic secularism of separating state and religion includes two distinct principles: (1) the non-interference of the state and religious organizations in each other’s affairs; (2) the absence of a legal connection between the state and a particular religion. Smith says the Indian Constitution does not subscribe to the first principle; it does however uphold the second³⁸.

The first two principles of religious freedom and equality are considered important constitutional values and foundation of Indian secularism. They do not pose much controversy. The third principle of neutrality and the separation of state and religion are regarded as the real crux of the problem. If secular state

has to be premised on the separation of religion and state or religion and politics few have argued that India is not a secular state. Others have questioned the premise itself and located many of the ills of our country in post independent India for insisting on the separation of religion and politics. The argument that secularism in India does not mean separation of religion and politics and it emerged out in the context of religious pluralism as religious tolerance or religious harmony or equal respect for all religions runs throughout not only in legal literature but also in the theorization of the social scientist. It is on the question of relationship between religion with state and politics that Hindu rightist and the liberal left have been very critical of the concept and practice of secularism in India.

The rise of communal specter has forced us to relook at the practice of secularism. Many academicians strongly question the conception of secularism itself. Secularism as practiced and articulated by the liberal and left oriented political parties and individuals is branded pseudo-secularism. Few intellectuals in fact have argued for the irrelevance of the concept in the Indian context as it is an imported concept.

After the Gujrat riots of 2002 Ashish Nandy has declared that secularism is dead and will not flourish in the near future³⁹. Earlier he had declared himself as anti-secularist⁴⁰. For Nandy secularism is an import from nineteenth-century Europe into South Asia and it is 'a part of a larger package consisting of a set of standardized ideological process – development, mega-science and national security' He divided religion into two mutually exclusive categories – faith and ideology.

By faith he means 'religion as a way of life, a tradition which is definitionally non-monolithic and operationally plural. I say 'definitionally' because, unless a religion is geographically and culturally confined to a small area, religion as way of life has in effect to turn into a confederation of a number of ways of life, linked by a common faith and some theological space for heterogeneity which everyday life introduces.....'⁴¹.

By ideology he means 'religion as a sub-national, national or cross national identifier of populations contesting for or protecting non-religious, usually political or socioeconomic, interests. Such religions-as-ideologies usually get identified with one or more texts which, rather than the ways of life of believers, then become the final identifiers of the pure forms of religions. The texts help anchor the ideologies in something seemingly concrete and delimited, and in effect provide a set of manageable operational definitions⁴².

Since secularism is imported from nineteenth-century Europe it has 'little to say about cultures'. It is ethnophobic and ethnocidal forces which want to destroy religion as ideology and faith. Problem with western secularism is 'it chalks out an area in public life where religion is admitted'. 'one can have religion in one's private life ... But when one enters public life, one is expected to leave one's faith behind'⁴³. Nandy sets out to recover 'a well known domain of public concern in South Asia, ethnic and especially religious tolerance, form the hegemonic language of secularism popularized by westernized intellectuals and middle classes exposed to the globally dominant languages of the nation-state in this part of the world'. He argues that this ideology of secularism, alongside the ideologies of nationalism and development, has become intolerant, coercive, even violent. Instead of relying on the westernized middle class Nandy argues that Indians should 'explore the philosophy, the symbolism and the theology of tolerance in the various faiths of the citizens and hope that the state systems in South Asia may learn something about religious tolerance from everyday Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and/or Sikhism...'. Pre-modern religious tolerance as seen in Gandhi's anti-secular and anti-modernist legacy that Nandy wants to recuperate in Indian secularism. He writes: 'Gandhi used to say that he was a sanatani, and orthodox Hindu. It was as a sanatani Hindu that he claimed to simultaneously a Muslim, a Sikh and Christian and he granted the same plural identity to those belonging to other faiths. Traditional Hinduism, or rather sanatan dharma, was the source of his religious tolerance...'⁴⁴.

Like Nandy T.N. Madan has argued that secularism in India is impossible as shared vision, impracticable as a basis for state action, and impotent as a blueprint for the future. Madan describes secularism as an alien cultural ideology

which lacks 'strong support of the state' which has become a 'vacuous word' and a 'phantom concept'. According to Madan secularism is 'a gift of Christianity' and a product of the Enlightenment, built into the western model of development and modernization – a model that has not been readily translatable or transferable to the cultural histories and traditions of South Asia. He writes "secularism is the dream of a [modernist] minority which wants to shape the majority in its own image, which wants to impose its will upon history but lacks power to do so under a democratically organized polity'. For him secularism is 'in the prevailing conditions in South Asia as a generally shared credo of life impossible, as a basis of state action impractical, and as a blueprint for the foreseeable future impossible'. He says the rise of Hindu nationalism and other religious extremism is lack of space of religion in secularism which denies, 'the very legitimacy of religion in human life and society'. To understand the relationship between religion and politics, Madan, like Nandy, turns to Gandhian inter-religious understanding as well as 'a spiritually justified limitation of the role of religious institutions and symbols in certain areas of contemporary life'. Only by retrieving secularism through a Gandhian understanding of inter-religious tolerance that religious strife can be countered⁴⁵.

In the company of Nandy and Madan Partha Chatterjee too shares the exhaustion of the capacity of secularism in addressing religious intolerance. He seeks "political possibilities within the domain of the modern state institutions as they now exist in India"⁴⁶. He feels that Nandy's misgivings about secularism as inadequate and inappropriate ground for meeting the challenge of Hindu majoritarianism.

Another sociologist who is in the bandwagon of modern state as neutral and secular and looks for native religion and practices is Veena Das. She criticizes the frame work of Indian Constitution where 'rights of individuals as well as the relationships between social groups are expected to be regulated and negotiated within the overarching conception of a neutral, secular state' because 'this theory of state.. relies heavily upon the "commonsense" of Western social sciences,

modernization of society leads to a “secular,” “scientific” attitude to life’⁴⁷. According to her, the problem with modern Indian state is that the “primordial loyalties” of religion, caste and region are privatized. These loyalties have gained importance to political life. She says, ‘this fact may be seen in Muslim fundamentalist successfully agitating against the right of the Supreme Court to interpret the Shariat law to provide relief to a divorced, aged Muslim woman; in members of the Sikh community who had lived in harmony with their Hindu neighbors for centuries now finding it necessary to reinterpret their history in militant communities for the “release” of various sacred places that, given the cultural geography of India, are also sacred to the Muslim’⁴⁸. For the religious loyalties Das says modernist and the secularist have nothing to offer except ‘substitute national, sacred symbols for secular ones – and this substitute is no answer at all’. Disheartened that ‘in the whole nationalist endeavor to transform Indian society’ Das says ‘we have paid scant attention to the manner in which our past, in its essence, could be adapted for the future’. Where to look for the past essence to be adapted for the future? She says ‘it is not in frozen metaphors that we seek our past, nor exotic myths and rituals that bear no relation to life whatsoever’ but in our heritage that is ‘in our own history and mythology, for images of the self and the other, of being and meaning, in order to develop them creatively’⁴⁹. The heritage of India is to be located in the principles of varnadharma and purusartha. For Das the claims of the modern secular state that institution of state and market are liberating and ‘primordial loyalties’ are enslaving and legal apparatus as the agency through which such aberrations can be remedied stands on a false notion. She suggests that ‘a creative transformation of some of the assumption of the ideology of caste may, in fact, help us to deal with the aberrations of the modern state’⁵⁰. The modern nation state claims its legitimacy in universal morality than primordial caste groups. Alternative notion of morality based on ‘reflection of purusartha or the four ends of life should be the new form of legitimation. The four ends are dharma, artha, kama, and moksa.’⁵¹

In contrast to Nandy, Madan and Chatterjee Rajeev Bhargava argues for contextual secularism which does not require strict non-interference, mutual exclusion or equidistance, but rather a policy of principled distance. The 'dominant justification of the policies and practices of the Indian state was done by appealing to contextual secularism of the principled distance variety; exclude religion for some purposes and include it to achieve other objectives, but always out on non-sectarian considerations'⁵². Bhargava argues that sectarian consideration by the state has degenerated the contextual secularism. He says, 'It has let religion enter politics when it ought to have excluded it, excluded religion when much could have been achieved by inclusion each time on sectarian grounds. The crisis on India secularism is undoubtedly real, but not because of conceptual flaws inherent in its theoretical structure'. He feels that secularism should not be interpreted in the narrow terms of state-church separation, but should be recognized as a historical response by the state to the problem of warring religious groups in Europe. In India also, the initial formulation of secularism was spurred by the need to tackle the Hindu-Muslim problem. In this Contextual background Bhargava argues 'contextual secularism' that allows politics to keep a principled distance from religious instigations, but ensures a dignified life for all, prevents discrimination on grounds of religion, checks religious bigotry, and manages internecine conflicts.

The exhaustion theory of secularism and looking at pre modern religious tolerance and Gandhian religious politics as an answer to religious tolerance has been criticized by many scholars. Amartya Sen has argued that secularism 'is in fact, a part of a more comprehensive idea – that of India as an integrally pluralist country, made up of different religious beliefs, distinct language groups, divergent social practices. Secularism is one aspect – a very important one – of the recognition of that larger idea of heterogeneous identity....Given the diversity and contrast within India, there is not, in the comprehensive politics of the country, much alternative to secularism as an essential part of overall pluralism'⁵³. In his article 'Secularism and its Discontents' Sen argues against distinct strands of

critique against secularism. Sen doesn't suggest that secularism is trouble free, but rather that any re examination of the difficult questions that arise from the principle of symmetrical treatment of different religious communities must occur within a commitment to secularism. He concludes that '..... the case for reexamining ...does not contradict the overarching argument for secularism and the overwhelming need for symmetric treatment of different communities and religions in India.....the winter of our discontent might not be giving way, right now, to a "glorious summer" but the abandonment of secularism would make things far more wintry than they currently are'⁵⁴.

Nandy's way of looking at the crisis of secularism as a consequence of modernity has been criticized. To look at pre-modern religious toleration as a solution to modern form of religious intolerance is 'nostalgic idealism'. Pantham argues that 'a wholesale rejection of modernity and a nostalgic yearning for the so-called nonpolitical religious tolerance of the past may inhibit us from finding or constructing emancipator or transformative practices from within our effective, modern history'⁵⁵. Akeel Bilgrami mainly focusing on Nandy's anti-secular manifesto critiques Nandy's anti modernist position. For Nandy's Hindu nationalism is the offshoot of Nehruvian state-imposed secularism where religious practice has no space. Hence they turn to religious politics. Bilgrami says nationalism is far more omnibus and vague formulation to analyze, than Nandy or the Hindu nationalists allow. There are a variety of ingredients that go into the variety of nationalism and lumping together different nationalisms like Palestinian nationalism with Zionist nationalism or the different stages of German nationalism would serve no purpose or it would be pointless. 'Nationalism can displace a people from their homeland or strive to find a state for a displaced people, it can have an intrinsic tie to social democracy, liberal democracy, autocracy, or fascism, it can work harmoniously with other communities and its representatives in anti-imperialist struggle or it can be as divisive of a people in its anti-imperial struggle as the imperialism it struggles against is in the policies by which it rules over the same people'⁵⁶. Bilgrami suggests that one of the frustrating features that go into

the making of “nationalism” is that it is ‘compendious and opaque notion’ and ‘some of its most narrowing and tyrannical aspects are a product of it being neurotically inclusivist’. In comparison to exclusivist what it produces is a ‘tin ear for the demands of regional autonomy because of its inclusivism’. For example as in the case of Pakistan in the name of Islamist ideology the ‘unifying nationalist image of an underlying exclusivist agenda for a dominant, centrist Punjabi ruling-elite to maintain their hold over the bureaucracy (and the military) and thereby eventually of the investible resources of the economy and the various elements which concentrate it in their hands’⁵⁷. The inherent exclusivity in inclusive nationalism cannot be found in Nandy’s historiography. Similarly the construction of monolithic, majoritarian, pseudo-unifying Hinduism as popularized by Sangh Parivar is not as secular imposed or a product of modernity. Bilgami says that ‘it is the product of a sustained effort over the centuries on the part of the upper castes to sustain their hold not only on the bases of political power but on the Hindu psyche’⁵⁸.

Similarly Peter van der Veer is also critical of Nandy’s attempt to demonstrate Hinduism as sanatan dharma as practiced by Gandhi which is true “faith”. Tolerance and religious pluralism are seen by Nandy in Gandhi’s religio-political discourse. In contrast to religion as faith, religion as ideology as practiced by Hindutva forces is intolerant and in opposition to pluralism of sanatan dharma.

Nandy’s attempt to rescue traditional Hinduism from the attacks of modernity is itself a product of modernity which he attacks says Peter Veer. ‘The idea that “real” religion or faith is essentially tolerant and pluralistic can only arise in a period in which religion becomes a limited sphere, separated from politics, economics and science’. Religion as tolerance and plural is a product of Christendom’s internal sectarian wars. According to Peter Veer if Hinduism is a way of life and does not adhere to any particular set of religious doctrines and practices then it is a good example of secularization. Further Peter Veer remarks that “it is absolutely stunning to see that Nandy uses the term sanatana dharma for this unideological, tolerant “faith”. In the nineteenth century the term sanatana

dharma came to stand for “orthodox Brahmanic Hinduism” a specific “ideological” formation intended to protect “traditionalist” values from attacks by reform movements, such as the Arya Samaj⁵⁹. Peter Deer completely deconstructs Nandy’s solution to communalism. He writes, ‘instead of sanatana dharma, we often find the term varnasranadharma in Hindu sources before the nineteenth century. It is a more specific term that refers to the division of society in four estates (varnas), hierarchichally ordered, and to the division of life in four stages. This Brahmanical ideology is constantly invoked as the “law and order” of society that has to be protected by the Hindu king, the dharmapala. Dharma is directly related to the state, to Hindu king. The plurality and heterogeneity about which Nandy speaks is thus ordered in specific hierarchical way, leaving Untouchables, Muslim (yavanas) and Christians (mlechchhas) outside the system. There is indeed some kind of tolerance for the plurality of ways of life involved here, since every species has its separate dharma’⁶⁰.

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Upadhyaya has argued that envisioning the state as ‘the representative of all religious communities’ becomes majoritarian secularism. The concept of sarva dharma samabahava has failed to transcend the communal category. Treating all religious communities as equal is defective because ‘one would be more equal than others – namely, the majority “Hindu community”’. This approach has given rise to a majoritarian politics where ‘representative politics based on adult franchise have become a contest in which communities are mobilized in a competition for votes, and in which the majority community must always win’.

In his view Indian secularism has been co-opted ‘by communal parties and ideologies in this way because it has never meant the separation of religion from politics. Instead, it defines religion and community as legitimate platforms for political mobilization, and merely preaches political accommodation between all religious communities. This is a definition that is open to interpretation and misrepresentation, and allows communalists to masquerade as secularists’⁶¹. Making a distinction between majoritarianism and communalism he says majoritarianism ‘represents accommodation and moderation as opposed to con-

frontation with minorities. It preaches not religious orthodoxy but religious heterodoxy. It maintains a semblance of tolerance as opposed to the outright intolerance of the communalist. It seeks to replace the language religious antagonism with the vocabulary of non-antagonistic communalism'⁶². So the major lacunae in the conceptualization of secularization in India 'lies in the definition of secularism....in that secularism has not been clearly defined in terms of the separation of religion from politics, either in its constitutional form or in the conventions of the political process'.

Zaheer Baber in his essay has remarked Nandy, Madan and other anti-secularist discourses as the 'new opium ofelite intellectuals ...in India'⁶³. He says the intellectuals' rush for a seat on the anti-secularist bandwagon threatens to wreck the erstwhile consensus among those who analyse Indian society⁶⁴. Criticizing Madan's acerbic ideological attack on secularism Zaheer argues that Madan treats 'religion and culture as neatly packaged, well defined homogeneous and hermetically sealed entities'⁶⁵ and his position is 'close to the resurrection of Orientalist and Indological fantasies about the essence of India'⁶⁶. Discussing Nandy's anti secularism Zaheer says that 'the irony of Nandy's obsession with colonialism, the "west" and the "imperialism of categories" is that his project grants too much power to the very ideas and institutions that he wants to challenge. And the power of the "imperialism of categories" is nowhere more evident than in Nandy's construction of neat binary categories and smug dismissal of all aspects of modernity' Zaheer calls the efforts of the anti secularist intellectual as "theoretical bubble – blowing". Painfully Zaheer remarks that 'one of the unintended but unfortunate consequences of recent unrelenting intellectual onslaught on "secularism" and the yearning for simpler, traditional, uncorrupted past has been the unwitting support to the dominant BJP/RSS/VHP discourse which such discussions have provided'⁶⁷.

The contention of Nandy and Madan that traditional India began corrupting during the colonial period has been accepted by the BJP/RSS/VHP as a general outline. The point of disagreement is with its periodization. 'The colonial period

is replaced by the “Muslim rule”, but the argument and reasoning, although geared towards different ends, remains pretty much the same.

A cursory look at the Hindu right wing’s articulation will suffice. ‘Organiser’ the mouthpiece of RSS the cultural wing of Bharatiya Janata Party carried a series of articles against secularism. In ‘The Anti-Secular Syndrome’, Organiser March 8, 1998, Anand Shankr Pandya, after attacking the critiques of Hindu right is of the view that for Hindus, secularism is spiritual rather than political and argues: ‘India’s true ideals were consigned to the dustbin long back, when the powers that be replaced them with alien concepts of socialism and secularism. Those inimical ideologies have undermined our traditional wisdom and harmed the nation. In fact, secularism is against the tenets of the Gita, wherein Lord Krishna says he would appear on this earth to rescue dharma whenever it is in danger’. M.V. Kamath in ‘Facing Up to History’, Organiser Feb 15, 1998 writes: ‘For the Hindu self-renewal is an impossibility under the deadening hold of the secular ideology. That ideology had to be discarded lock, stock and barrel, and the process has begun..... One cannot renew Hinduism if one does not accept its reality. In consequence, secularism has had to be sacrificed..... Once India is liberated from the secular bonds that are presently trying it down to earth there is no knowing to what height of glory it can rise’. Dr Abraham Varghese in ‘Secular Stigma Must be Removed’ Organiser June 7, 1998 argues that secularism as a concept is not necessary for India, since a respect for religions is deeply rooted in Indian tradition. He writes ‘the concept of secularism is the last wedge driven by the departing colonial power into the Indian society to make it perpetually divided. In fact there is no need for the term ‘secular’ to appear in the Constitution or dominate all our political parties. It is high time we removed this stigma and colonial stamp from our national identity’⁶⁸.

Finally the most important critique of scholars who have rejected secularism as western and irrelevant to the Indian context comes from the famous historian Romila Thapar. She says debates on Indian secularism overlook two important aspects: one, secularism is related to the process of social and political change

called secularization and two, secularism posited as opposition to religion generally limited to only a segment of Hinduism, namely Vedic Brahmanism and some aspects of Puranic Hinduism ignoring heterodox religions like Buddhism, Jainism which questioned Vedic Brahmanism.. For Romila Thapar secularizing process is implicit in secularism. She suggests that ‘the secularization of society is linked to inclusive nationalism and the creation of a nation-state with an attempt to modernize society’⁶⁹. Modernization of a society is associated with capitalism and industrialization, establishment of democracy and the rights of citizens. The modern secular state opposes a state religion. This secularization does not oppose religion but ‘prefers that religious authorities should not control the institutions linked to social ethics, economic development and cultural change’⁷⁰. The anti-secularists who maintain that secularism is alien to India narrowly focus on the contest between church and state. ‘The contest in Europe’ says Romila Thapar ‘was not between religion per se and the state, but between the dominance of the church as an institution sanctioned by religion, over social functioning and the attempt of the state to intervene in this function’ and ‘to limit the discussion merely to secularism being that which is opposed to religion, is to confine it to the least important aspect, since the process of secularization has its major impact on civil society – on issues of social welfare, the distribution of resources, and on human rights relating to citizenship and access to the law’⁷¹.

Meandering through the communal and secular discourse this brief and eclectic survey of literature on communalism and secularism the paradigm of their criticism is based on certain presuppositions

Firstly the critics of communalism and secularism base their argument on the assumption that there had always existed a Pan Indian Hindu community and a Pan Indian Muslim community. The political assertion of these religious communities as political communities is the crux of the problem of communalism.

Secondly the critics of secularism base their argument that model of secularism as it emerged in the west is irrelevant to South Asian countries because in these countries religion is part and parcel of their life.

Thirdly the above argument is based on the assumption that the controversies that was generated as a consequence of protestant reformation has resulted in the separation of religion and the state, religion has been pushed to the realm of individual's private life, religion has nothing to do in the public life of the individual etc.

Fourthly, critics of secularism ignore the process of formation of states in Europe breaking up from Christendom which is intrinsically connected to the formation of secular nation states and all states identically did not break their relationship with the church.

Fifthly secularism is closely related to the process of secularization. The formation of secular states is the product of the process of secularization. The process of secularization is not completely a state sponsored phenomena but multiple religious, social, political and economic forces had a major role in the outcome of nation state formation.

Sixthly critiques of communalism and secularism ignore the dual role of religion – one religion as an instrument of the state legitimizing the prevailing inequitous social order with state patronage and two, religion as popular religion of the oppressed class articulating their grievances in another religious idiom for an egalitarian society.

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CHAPTER - II

SECULARISM IN THE WEST

A few years ago a vituperative exchange of articles on secularism took place in one of the popular Indian weeklies – ‘Outlook’. Kuldip Nayar a well known journalist criticized Prof. Ashish Nandy’s position on secularism¹. Nandy reiterated his position that secularism is a dry import from the west unable to find roots in the Indian soil with a counter article titled ‘a Billion Gandhis’². Joining the debate eminent historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam led a vitriolic attack on Nandy proclaiming that secularism was never important in western history or politics. He said, “the term ‘secularism’ has very little purchase in most European or indeed other western societies as a part of normal political vocabulary. Even today, no one in the political sphere talks much about ‘secularism’ in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, Spain or Portugal or in the United States, Argentina, or Brazil. Neither Tony Blair nor Mrs Thatcher has ever used the word in a speech that I can remember. The only Europeans who use some sort of a term like that are the French, with their idea of *laïcité*”³ Accusing Nandy of being ahistorical Subhrahmanyam argues that secularism meant separation of state from one particular religion i.e., Catholicism and ‘the idea of ‘secularism’ propagated in nineteenth-century Britain by George Holyoake and then Charles Bradlaugh (who founded the National Secular Society in 1866) was for the most part one linked to promoting rationalism in education rather than education through religious schools’. Therefore it is an error to simply say that secularism is an imported idea when it is not a common usage in western politics. Nandy is not the only scholar who considers secularism as an imported idea from the west. Other scholars like T.N. Madan and Partha Chatterjee, too have argued the irrelevance, inapplicability or non compatibility of western concept of secularism to India.

The relationship between state and religion is the central thesis of the study of secularism. The assumption is that modern secularism and its embodiment in the nation state stands for the iron wall of separation between state and religion and it is crystallized in the privatization of religion. Before undertaking any exercise of understanding secularism one has to keep in mind that secularism as an ideology of separation of church and the state is in the formation national states which broke away from the church's suzerainty. Secondly the decline of religion in modern societies is analyzed under the process of secularization. There is fundamental difference as to how different national states in western Europe negotiated religion and broke away from the clutches of the church, church induced Christianity and how the national states developed political values, civil society, democratic institution, citizenship, rights, and liberal constitutions upon which nation states were built.

The historical example of west European state formation offers a perspective and prevailing model of secular state. The history of secularism in the west is not just a conflict between the king and the pope but a history of emergence of nation states. The socio-political values imbibed from the enlightenment, enlightenment's crusade against religion, anti church and anti pope protest movements, industrialization etc all contributed in the emergence of secular states. But it would be difficult to give precedence to any one factor which triggered the emergence of secular state. Hence secularism and secularization has to be looked holistically in the emergence of nation-states.

Models of secularism and process of secularization has been derived largely from the historical experience of Western Europe. This model is increasingly offered as a yardstick to evaluate secularism in other parts of the world. It is one of the important movements which differentiated modern west from ancient and Middle Ages as well as from other regions of the world. The modern west is what it is largely because of secularism. A better understanding of the history and nature of secularism will help people understand its role and influence in society today.

Before accepting or rejecting the idea of secularism as a western concept that is super imposed on India we have to look into the context and the subsequent socio-political, religious, cultural changes that took place in the west. Historical processes of state formation are crucial for an understanding of the religions and churches in Europe. Each country has developed its own model of state-church relations. Reformation led to religious wars in Europe. The European monarchies had to come to terms with rival religious claims. The religiously sanctioned traditional authority was crumbling paving the way for centralized monarchical state backed by bureaucracy and strong military forces. The emerging centralized monarchical states negotiated its relations with church and religion in different ways. In England the monarch established a national church by seceding from the Roman Church and in France the clergy was subjected to monarchs control and France the king successfully liquidated the claims of the Papacy.

The fact of the matter is secularism emerged in the west. It was the outcome of the struggle between the church and the state. The relationship between Church and State is described as the institutional form of the relation between religion and politics. As a problem, 'Church and State' has been a particularly Western and Christian concern. This is not only because Western secularization was required a limit to the powers of religious authorities. But it has its origins in a much earlier period, in the development of separate Church and State institutions in Christendom which were natural rivals claiming authority and law enforcement. As Charles Taylor says, the "use of the term 'secular' is in 'Christendom', because it is there that the story starts"⁴. Peter Van Der Veer also express similarly. He says that "the European wars of religion of the 16th and 17th centuries were concerned precisely with the question of the relation between political and ecclesiastical authority. They were fought around the central issue of political loyalty: Can one be loyal to the state when one is not following the religion of the state?"⁵. The reformation movement led by Martin Luther in the 16th century triggered religious controversies and religious wars. Christians slaughtered Christians. Christian state warred against Christian

state because of differences in Christian doctrine. Various princes within the western Christendom took sides supporting or opposing the pope and the church on the one side and Protestantism led by Martin Luther and others on the other. But the history of secularism and the gradual decline of religion cannot be reduced to the life of Martin Luther or the controversies reformation generated between the church and the state. The history of secularism is larger than the religious controversies. Continuous bloodshed in the name of the religion made people realized the need to create some separation between Christianity on the one hand and the state and culture on the other. This paved the way for society to develop basic institutions and principles of social organization on which all could be a part of the political organization regardless of ecclesiastical affiliation. Emergence of independent state system, renaissance, enlightenment, industrialization, modernization and development of science are linked to the crystallization of the idea of secularism and secularization in the 18th and 19th century.

The decline of religion in the west is co-related to the rise of powerful independent sovereign states and the growth of science⁶. The gradual decline of religion is analyzed as a process of secularization. Nation states are modern political institutions. In particular historical epoch nation states emerged as distinct from pre modern states. To understand these modern phenomena of decline of the influence of religion on western states, society and individual we have to look at the history of medieval Europe called Christendom or Roman Catholic Empire. What was the role of religion in state and society? What was the relationship between state and the church? What was the relationship between rulers and the pope? What were the reasons that led Martin Luther to revolt against pope and religion? These questions will have to be analyzed preliminarily to understand secularism and secularization.

CHRISTENDOM AND THE RISE OF PAPAL POWER

In Europe, from the very early times, the Roman Catholic Church exercised immense power over all aspects of life. In the West different factors affected church and state relations. The conversion of Emperor Constantine in 306-307 AD and other socially influential classes, gave the Church an immense recognition

and opportunity to enter the secular world. Emperor Constantine had established Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire. Christianity becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire was achieved by struggling against the Roman Pagan religion and surviving the persecution from Roman authorities⁷. After the collapse of Western Roman Empire in the fifth century Western Europe plunged into chaos. There was no central power in the West, but there was a central ecclesiastical power, in the Roman Church which had claimed primacy from the earliest times. The barbarian invasions and the ensuing anarchy resulted in a tremendous growth in the power of the papacy. After the defeat of Romulus Augustus by the barbarian king Odoacer in 476 Roman Empire was split into Western Roman Empire and Eastern Roman Empire referred as 'Byzantine Empire'. The east Roman emperors retained from their court at Constantinople the nominal rule of the whole empire, though Europe west of the Balkans, and North Africa, had for the most part passed to the various barbarian tribes who settled in them⁸. The Catholic Church was already a powerful institution at the end of the Roman Empire and it continued to be the unifying force between the many small kingdoms that would become Europe.

Until the crowning of Charlemagne western empire did not have any legitimate emperor. It was ruled by kings who enjoyed the support of the largely barbarian armies. It was ruled by various kingdoms like the Ostrogoths in Italy, the Visigoths in Spain and Portugal, the Franks and Burgundians in Gaul and western Germany, and Saxons in England. If there was any unifying influence it was the Christian church. The division of the Roman Empire into Western Roman Empire and Byzantine Empire also divided the church into western church and the orthodox church of the east. The alliance between the Church and various imperial rulers came to be known as the Holy Roman Empire and was best symbolized by the Pope's crowning of Charlemagne in 800 and the German king, Otto I, in 952.⁹ The religious controversy and the socio political development that we are discussing is limited to the west European empire also referred as Latin Christendom.

The period of the middle ages is normally referred to the fall of Roman Empire in the fifth century to the rise of renaissance in the sixteenth century. Maurice Keen define the period of 800 – 1449 as the middle ages. He writes, ‘on Christmas Day in the year 800, Charlemagne, the King of Franks was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III in the church of St. Peter at Rome.....This is one limit. The other is 1449 when, after twenty years of session the Council of Basle was finally dissolved. The council had come together as a body representing the whole of Catholic Europe, both its churches and its kingdoms and claimed powers to judge orthodoxy and to oversee the quarrels by princes. No single assembly or institution was ever again recognized as existing such extended authority throughout Europe as in its heyday, men had acknowledged to belong to it by right.....In the 1530s one could no longer speak of Catholic Europe in the same sense as men had done in 800 and in 1449’ ¹⁰. Though the influence of the church on the emerging states and society continued till the eighteenth century during this period the relationship and controversy between the state and church, the pope and various kings determined the emergence of secular states. The coronation indicated a reciprocal relationship between the king and the Pope. The persecuted Pope Leo III in Rome needed protection and recognition of his authority by a king who was superior to all. By crowning the king of the Franks Charlemagne the Emperor now was the Emperor of the whole Christian world and he was expected to fight the ‘iconoclastic heresy and to establish the supremacy of the Roman pontiff over all the Church’¹¹. The king shall aid the church with arms. The existence of the council to decide ecclesiastical controversies as well as heir to various kingdoms gave the empire a sense of unity. It was only in ‘religious sense than any other’ that western Europe had any sense of unity¹². ‘When people spoke of Christendom geographically in, say, the year 1250, they meant the totality of regions we would now call Iceland, Scandinavia, the British Isles, France, most of Spain and Portugal, all of Italy, the Low Countries, Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, and Croatia. In all these regions the

dominant political power was vested in avowed Roman Catholic Christians' says Jordan¹³.

The western Christendom or the Holy Roman Empire was an amalgamation of various states which showed allegiance to Church and Pope. But Christianity had not become European religion. It took many centuries. The gradual transformation of Christianity from a Mediterranean to a European religion 'was slow and gradual'¹⁴. With the disintegration of the Roman Empire the Christian Church replaced the politico-military institutions of Rome. The church established its own law (canon law), ecclesiastical courts, and administrative hierarchy of priests, bishops, and cardinals. The capital of the empire became the capital of the Catholic Church. The bishops of Rome achieved ascendancy over Church's religio-administrative hierarchy and established the papacy. 'Christianity's message of kindness, humility, patience, mercy, purity, and chastity was fused with the governing practices of the Roman imperial state: hierarchy, order, virtue, patriarchy, and law. In effect, the Church had become the Roman Empire'¹⁵. The church's suzerainty expanded beyond the territorial boundaries and community of believers. The feudal politico-military practices did not constitute state in the modern sense. There were no standing army or an institutionalized decision making body. Though people showed allegiance to particular noble, king or a feudal lord their loyalty was not linked to any political structures. 'To the extent people recognized an inter subjective social unity that linked them to people outside their immediate local surroundings, it was a vast Christian community of believers under the authority of the Catholic Church that came to be called Christendom'¹⁶.

In pre-modern times religion and religious institutions had far greater power than they did later. The medieval European society was divided into estates – feudal lords, vassals and the serfs. Men belonged to the estate to which he was born. Society was based on hierarchy and rank. It was accepted that one was born to a certain rank and remained there. A man born to a noble class was a noble. A man born to a peasant remained peasant. This hierarchical

social stratification was reinforced and legitimized by law and religion. The church ensured support and patronized certain lords as defenders of faith. The complex interwoven relationship between the church, empire, peasantry, lords and artisans is broadly categorized as feudalism. As Otto Muduro puts it, “the history of the subjection of the European peasantry under feudal sway was marked by the intimate collaboration of armed violence and religious persuasion – the “alliance of throne and altar”....feudal Europe had a preeminently religious vision of the world..... the feudal aristocracy...had recourse to the Catholic clergy with whom it had close economic, religious and family bonds, to legitimate the feudal regimen”¹⁷. Helen Ellerbe says Orthodox Christians had defended slavery as part of the divinely ordained hierarchical order. She quotes passages in the Bible which supported the institution of slavery: ‘Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for eve.’ St. Paul instructed slaves to obey their masters. The early St. John Chrysostom wrote: ‘The slave should be resigned to his lot, in obeying his master he is obeying God...And in the City of God, St. Augustine wrote: ...slavery is now penal in character and planned by that law which commands the preservation of the natural order and forbids disturbance’¹⁸.

The organization of the Church became increasingly formalized and systematized through the development of canon law and administrative agencies. In the emerging segmented feudal society the church maintained centralized fundamental unity. The organizational unity combined with its involvement with secular aspects of life enabled the Church to have immense influence over the social and political life. In a highly stratified society like medieval Europe where the society was divided into various estates like aristocratic, nobles and serfs, the Church played little role in condemning this highly stratified order. In fact,

the Church was so interwoven with the feudal system that it became a property holder. The clergy became lords of the land with political jurisdiction.

The Christianization of Western Europe and the expansion of the powers of the church enhanced the power and prestige of the pope as well as the emperor recognized by the church. In the Christianized Western Europe the Emperor was crowned by the Pope. Though the emperor possessed vast powers his writ did not run throughout his empire. Vast areas of the empire enjoyed autonomy and powerful knights did not care for the authority of the emperor. If there was a fusion of the Pope and the Emperor it was also riddled with constant friction. There was constant rift between the king and the feudal lords, and frequent quarrels and disputes between the Emperors and the Popes. The emperor had control over one kingdom, whereas Pope exercised his influence over all the Christian Kingdoms and the conflict for supremacy and authority continued for centuries.

The emergence of strong kingdoms like in France and England, a struggle between the papacy and the temporal powers began. The principle of contention between the king and the pope was over the 'investiture and caesropapism'. In the 11th and 12th centuries popes challenged the authority of European monarchies over control of appointments or investitures of church officials such as bishops. Secondly a theory whereby secular rulers exercised direct control over the church was questioned by the popes. The contention was whether the emperor or king who ruled by divine right should control the church as well as the state and the pope as vicar of god on earth should have the right of supervision over the state. Bitter clashes took place between emperor and popes.

With Pope Gregory VII asserting not only supreme spiritual power but also supreme secular power to depose kings the medieval papacy shaped into a powerful force. He humbled German Emperor Henry IV by first excommunicating him and later made him to wait for three days for reconciliation. In this struggle feudal lords sided either with the Pope or the Emperor. Various factors led to the growth of papal power. Firstly papacy had to balance various

secular rulers. Secondly with the growth of feudalism secular and sacred hierarchy was ultimately linked to the emperor and the pope. Thirdly papacy had an important role of arbitration whenever kings had difficulty in controlling the bishops. Fourthly territorial jurisdiction of the pope by not allowing any powerful ruler within Italy to rise, possessing small army and receiving donation from kings enhanced the power and prestige of the Pope¹⁹. The growing importance of church made pope's desire for more power. They claimed 'not only that every person was subject to papal authority, but that the Pope himself was accountable to no one but God'. In 1302 Pope Boniface issued the bull *Unam Sanctam*: Therefore, if the earthly power errs, it shall be judged by the spiritual power... but if the supreme spiritual power errs it can be judged only by God, and not by man... Therefore we declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff²⁰.

Among the popes who asserted the primacy of spiritual power and exercised the secular power was Innocent III. He adopted the title "Vicar of Christ" where 'vicar' meant 'representative' or 'substitute'. For Innocent serving the vicar in the right manner was primary to ruling the kingdom. He said "no king can reign correctly unless he serves the Vicar of Christ"²¹. Innocent set out the principle of the subordination of the state to the church in the following way: "Just as the creator of the universe established two great lights in the firmament of heaven (the greater one to rule the day, and the lesser one to rule the night), so he also appointed two dignitaries for the firmament of universal church (which is referred to as "heaven"). The greater of these rules souls (the "night"). These dignitaries are the authority of the pope and the power of the king. And just as the moon derives her light from the sun, and is inferior to the sun in terms of its size and its quality, so the power of the king derives from the authority of the pope"²².

Western Europe in the middle ages witnessed continuous and prolonged struggle between the Pope and the Emperor. This struggle was mainly fought

out in Italy and Germany. Neither the Emperor nor the Pope could achieve supremacy over the other. The influence of the papacy over the kingdom varied over the regions of Europe. The papacy many times challenged the emperor and at times encouraged other kings to challenge the emperor. The controversy that was never resolved but had far reaching consequences was the Investiture Controversy which involved Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV, Holy Roman Emperor, who initially clashed over a specific bishop's appointment and turned into a battle over the ideas of investiture and clerical marriage. The Emperor, as a Christian ruler, considered the protection of the Church as one of his rights and responsibilities. But the Papacy was insisting on its independence from secular lords. The conflict in the long run helped to establish papal monarchy. The popes Innocent III, Gregory IX, and above all Innocent IV attacked the emperor with varying degrees of success. Frederick II was excommunicated and deposed, which led to anarchy. The conflict between the French king Philip the Fair and the pope Boniface VIII, ended with the humiliation of the pope at Anagni in 1303, and with the exile of 'captivity' of the papacy at Avignon between 1305 and 1376. The confrontation in the first half of the fourteenth century between the pope John XXII and the emperor Ludwig the Bavarian was merely a relic of the earlier struggle²³. These sporadic conflicts determined the relationship between the church and the emperor and had a long term impact on the jurisdictional role of the secular rulers like emperor, kings, and other administrators on the one hand and the spiritual or sacred representative like the Pope, the bishops and the catholic clergy on the other. It was contestation and compromise between the emperor and the pope, the kings and the pope, the king and the bishops and at times between the pope and the bishops. In short the relationship between the ecclesiastical and secular authorities is understood as the struggle between the emperor and the pope, the conflict between the sacred and the secular, conflict between the church and the state or the conflict between Sacerdotium and Imperium.

DECLINE OF THE CHURCH AND THE PAPAL POWER

As noted earlier Western Europe developed a sense of unity only in the religious sense. The Crusades, the fight against the Moors and the Ottomans

– a papal enterprise, helped the rise of Western Church’s authority over all European Christians and also develop a sense of Christian identity over political divisions. Church was the most powerful institution unifying various small and big kingdoms. But the unifying features started crumbling on three counts. First the language of the church was incomprehensible Latin. The language of the masses was termed the ‘vulgar tongue’. All those who could not speak Latin were considered barbarians. But the ‘living reality of the medieval west was the progressive triumph of the vulgar tongues and the increase in the number of interpreters, translations, and dictionaries’²⁴. The rise of vernacular languages did not give rise to linguistic nationalism but in the long run it led to gradual development of nation states based on common language. “The retreat of Latin before the vulgar languages did not take place without linguistic nationalism creeping in. Here a nation in the making asserted itself by defending its language” says Jacques Le Goff²⁵. W.C.Jordan has argued that “when Latin was providing a glue binding the intellectual elite in universities and the universal church, the vernaculars were providing a basis for a countervailing localism. The early influence of churchmen in newly Christianized, northern European governments had made Latin the official language of record in many courts and administrative bureaus. In the thirteenth century this monopoly collapsed; in the fourteenth, Latin was in retreat except as tradition and prestige required it in certain kinds of records and transactions. In the fourteenth century and later, however, the languages of pleading in the hundreds of new courts across Europe and the languages of recording the decisions were vernacular. As literatures began to emerge or re-emerge in vernaculars in the twelfth and with a vengeance in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, distinctive regional or national traditions and genres emerged”²⁶. The emergence of press for propagation of new ideas helped in the decline of Latin. The translation of Luther’s theses and Bible into German and other vernacular languages ultimately reduced the Latin to the language of the church. Secondly the rise of monarchical states especially England and France in the late middle ages strengthened royal control over the kingdoms. The rise of royal power enabled the kings to impose tax clergy and confiscate church properties, declare war and enforce laws all by the will

of the king. Thirdly reformation triggered by Martin Luther demolished Papal supremacy, Pope's monopoly of interpreting the scriptures and more importantly liberating the masses by asserting that all believers were priests. Luther's reformation came at a time when the 'prestige of the Pope as a religious leader of was at an all time low'²⁷.

Corruption in the Church, declining character of the Popes, indulgences and luxurious and corrupt life became eye-sore for the people. Helen Ellerbe examines the Church's devastating impact upon human freedom, dignity, spirituality and the Church's desire to control and contain spiritually, motivated its persecution of heretics, its burning of libraries, the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the witch-hunts. She argues that Orthodox Christianity originally representing one of many sets of early Christian beliefs came to wield political power through Roman government which 'won unprecedented authority and privilege. Their church became known as the Church'²⁸. By political maneuvering membership to Christianity was increased. They succeeded in turning Christianity from an abhorred minor cult into the official religion of the Roman Empire. Ellerbe writes: "Constantine, a man who had his own son executed and his wife boiled alive, saw in Christianity a pragmatic means of bolstering his own military power and uniting the vast and troubled Roman Empire. The story is told of Constantine's dream which led to his acceptance of Christianity in which he saw a cross in the sky inscribed with the words, "In this sign thou shalt conquer." While he personally converted to Christianity only on his deathbed, Constantine recognized Christianity as a means of conquering dissention within the Roman Empire and instated it as the Empire's official religion"²⁹.

In his reform writings Martin Luther denied the mediatorial function of the church and the priesthood for salvation, drew up his famous 95 theses against the indulgences and invited the German princes to take the reform of the Church into their own hands, and to abolish tributes to Rome, the celibacy of the Clergy, Masses for the dead, pilgrimages, religious orders and other catholic practices and institutions³⁰. The greatest damage to the monolithic Catholic

Church was done by reformation. The Protestant Reformation led to the fragmentation of Western Christendom, with diverse sects and denominations emphasizing alternative beliefs and doctrines. Scholars have noted the far reaching consequences let loose by reformation. 'The unity and strength of the Christian church had been broken by the Protestant-Catholic split of the sixteenth century and by the subsequent religious wars. Secular rulers in many countries had succeeded in asserting the primacy of the state over the church in matters of land control and clerical appointments. At the same time, the more widespread use of the printing press diminished the ability of the church to control what was read and what was taught. By the seventeenth century, the church was no longer in a position to shape and propagate a single worldview for the entire European public. The possibility of an alternate vision was to be found in the scientific and intellectual developments that emerged. It was through the scientific study of nature and the systematic analysis of society that Kant's precursors developed the necessary tools and established a foundation for building new ideas'³¹.

The rivalry between the emperor and the pope was an important feature of European middle ages politics. If the popes claim to rule was as a representative of Vicar, the monarchs too claimed to rule the state as well as the church by taxing the church properties, appointing bishops and clergy by divine right. The claim to exercise power either by the king or the pope was rooted in divine theories. The divine origin of power was the justification to political power and the hierarchical iniquitous status of people in society was legitimized by these two rivals again in the name of the religion. The feudal culture as an ideology that legitimated the existing political order 'centered on the role of the church in offering a morality of obedience and acceptance of one's place in the social order'³².

The medieval Church preserved and presented distinctive features of state. With its claim to supreme jurisdiction which was universally accepted throughout Christendom the Church could appear as the highest earthly power and the

moderator and source of all law. Its authority was essentially attributed to its spiritual rule. The medieval church avoided direct use of might in enforcement of temporal matters because the church was unable to exercise it except in its own small territorial domains. When ambitious popes tried to proclaim and establish church's universal lordship, the attempt ended in lamentable failure. Luther was not alone in his anger at the Church. People were angry at the Church for interfering in the governments. Cardinals of various national states were not properly represented. Italian monopolization of the College of Cardinals was resented by Germans, Frenchmen, Spaniards and Englishmen. Most Europeans felt that the Church did not represent the true faith or religion. Instead, they believed that the popes were more interested in gaining wealth and power than in reforming the Church. The oppressive nature of the church forced the kings and commoners to struggle against the control of the church and religion from political affairs as well as everyday life. With all of this in mind Lutheranism gained a large following among the common people, and Luther received support from wealthy and powerful princes. Very quickly, Lutheranism spread throughout Germany, especially in the north. From Germany, it spread to Scandinavia, the area containing the countries of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Other than Luther, Calvin from France started a protest movement against the Church. John Calvin also complained about the Catholic Church. Many people listened. Calvin even thought that the French king, Francis I, would help him, because the French king supported the Lutheran princes of Germany in their struggle against the Emperor. Calvin was wrong. The French king remained Catholic. Calvin left France and went to Switzerland. Switzerland eventually became a Calvinist country.

What caused the success of the Protestant Reformation was that firstly there was corruption in the Church. Secondly the Church was involved in the politics of different kings. Thirdly the popes refused to reform the Church. Fourthly the printing press, developed in 1514, helped the protest movement by quickly getting information to the people. Fifthly the leaders of the protest

movement were able to convince people of their true desire to reform the Church and lastly the Renaissance brought new ideas into Europe. People began to question old ideas. To many people, the Church represented old ideas.

With this brief survey of the complex relationship between the church and the state, normally the study of the concept of secularism is situated in the conflict of rival claims to rule the sacred and the secular and the separation of the most well organized religious institution of the Middle Ages – the church and the emerging monarchical states. The church with its claim to supreme jurisdiction, accepted throughout Christendom, became the most powerful institution in the middle ages, source of all law and power and authority attributed to spirituality. One of the important facts to be noted is that church exercised its direct rule only in its own small territorial domains. Some did try to establish church's overlord ship with partial and temporary success. With protestant reformation an abuse ridden Catholic Church was not only divided into two rival religious sects but also could never rise to challenge the emerging sovereign states. The despotic monarchs started challenging the over lordship of Rome. In this process the monarchs internally mobilized the estates to resist Roman papacy. If the monarchs like in Germany were weak, then they had to submit to Pope. But powerful monarchs of England and France successfully resisted the papal power.

The process of sovereign state formation in west Europe is rooted in the ruins of European Christendom. Protestantism swept through Germany, Switzerland, the Low Countries, England, Scotland, the Scandinavian Kingdoms, as well as through parts of France, Hungary and Poland. Though both considered Christians the animosity between Protestants and Catholics sparked a series of civil wars in France and England as well as the bloody Thirty Years War involving Germany, Sweden, France, Denmark, England, the Netherlands, and the Holy Roman Empire represented by the Hapsburgs³³. The national states emerged by breaking away from Papal/ Church's suzerainty. It was a rupture of the sacred and the secular. It was a break of political and religious institutions clearly demarcating the jurisdiction – the church confined to man's spiritual needs

and the state with secular administration. To conclude the separation of state - a political institution, from the church - a religious institution as decline of religion, privatization of religion and lack of freedom to express religion in public sphere is ahistorical. The division of church and state, and the rise of secular-rational bureaucratic states and representative governments, displaced the rule of spiritual leaders, ecclesiastical institutions, and hereditary rulers claiming authority from God. The emergence of modern states did not result in the decline of religion in man's life. In fact the controversies generated by Protestantism had an important role in the emergence of centralized monarchical states in Europe. As Herman Dunk says "the rise of a centralized monarchy with an efficient bureaucracy was an outcome of the internal crisis of the church and Christianity during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.....the process took very different forms in various countries...in England and France the king successfully liquidated the claims of the papacy. In England this was achieved through secession and the establishment of a separate church; in France the clergy were made subjects of the Crown. In Spain there was a fusion of interests between the monarchy the counter-offensive of the Catholic Church against the Reformation". Though all these struggles were couched in religious terms 'these religious struggles were also struggles about political and social positions and rights'³⁴.

EMERGENCE OF STATES AND THE DECLINE OF ORGANIZED RELIGION

Although secularism is closely related to religious controversies, rivalry and the subsequent separation of the church and the state, the influence of religion in socio-political affairs continued till the advent of enlightenment movement. The influence of organized religion did decline in western societies. State distanced itself being identified with religious institutions or particular religious denominations. The conflict between the emperor and the pope or the separation of state and the church is discussed at the pan European level or the western Christendom. The challenge to the papal authority was at the local or at the level of emerging states. It was the emergence of nation states that resulted in the decline of papal authority and religion. Churches instead of showing allegiance towards Rome gradually became national churches. Allegiance towards state became primary. Primary loyalty to the pope was considered disloyalty

towards the national state. Scholars have noted the impact of emergence of states to the decline of religion. Bryan Wilson says, “the growth of state societies and the development of science are but two of the various process that have led to the alienation of western culture from its religious roots”³⁵. ‘The Reformation permanently broke the medieval form of religious unity of western Christendom, and a Europe was created in which religious and political elements were interwoven in a very intricate, pluralistic fashion’ says Talcot Parsons³⁶. Similarly David Held remarks, “it was not until western Christendom was under challenge, especially from the conflicts generated by the rise of national states and by the Reformation, that the idea of the modern state was born, and the ground was created for the development of anew form of political identity – national identity”³⁷.

The rise of modern nation states and the ideology of nationalism promoted secularism. The emerging nation states undermined organized religion. Organized religion, religious ideology and religious loyalties not only tend to cross national boundaries but also supported hierarchical relations between individuals, estates, minorities and gender. Trans-national loyalties and hierarchical relations conflicted with the emerging nations. Nationalism became a secular force which was accompanied by modernization and industrialization. It involved egalitarian social and political treatment. Respect to individual rights, minorities, non-believers was the foundational principles of state and society. It endorsed the separation of church and the state.

The emergence of absolute monarchical states in the seventeenth and eighteenth century demolished papal power. To trace and limit the origin of secularism to the controversies to the separation of church and the state and to the question of superiority of sacred or spiritual power over secular and vice versa is ahistorical. Multiple level changes took place in Europe. One of the important movements in Europe that challenged church and the religious outlook was Enlightenment which stood for reason, rationality and questioning the theological interpretations of the world. The Pre - Reformation Europe was

riddled with religious outlook, revealed religions monopoly to truth and religious legitimacy to socio political order. 'When it came to the legitimization of natural order, the people of pre-Enlightenment Europe strove to understand unusual natural events, such as earthquakes, floods, crop failures, monstrous births, and the appearance of comets, as God's punishment for sins or as a divine threat of judgment. The religious legitimization of the secular and natural order was thus common and exceedingly varied in this period'³⁸. Rival political theologies – Roman Catholic, Protestantism and Calvinism competed for ultimate revealed truth. Enlightenment let loose forces that questioned the theologically oriented knowledge, religiously sanctioned social hierarchy and political legitimacy. Natural law, Natural Justice, social contract, rights, popular sovereignty etc became new tools of emancipation.

It is against this religiously legitimated socio-political order that enlightenment intellectuals revolted with the weapon of scientific enquiry, scientific discoveries and ruthless questioning the existing religious based knowledge. The origins of modern state lie with the ideas and philosophies popularized by individuals and groups which contributed to the formation of a new state and society. The unity and strength of Christian church was broken by protestant revolt and subsequent religious wars. The primacy of the state was asserted by secular rulers. The church's power declined in matters of land control and clerical appointments. 'By the seventeenth century, the church was no longer in a position to shape and propagate a single worldview for the entire European public. The possibility of an alternate vision was to be found in the scientific and intellectual developments that emerged'³⁹. One of the greatest philosophers of Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was asked, "What is the Enlightenment?" and he answered, "Dare to know! Have the courage to use your own intelligence!"⁴⁰. Enlightenment emphasized the use of reason to scrutinize previously accepted doctrines and traditions.

Awakening from medieval slumber Europe was growing with rational empirical inquiry. Along with reformation of the church there was renaissance

in arts and learning. Instead of taking note of what rulers and priests people worked out new ideas for themselves. Rational enquiry was the essence of this movement. This period emphasized on classics as contributing to thought and learning. This was a time when people became curious about the world they live in. The target of enlightenment thinkers was revealed religion, ecclesiastical authorities and divinely sanctioned monarchies of Europe. In the words of historian Peter Gay it broke through "the sacred circle". The interdependent relationship between the hereditary aristocracy, the leaders of the church and the text of the Bible is the Sacred Circle. The interrelationship manifests itself as kings invoking the doctrine "Divine Right of Kings" to rule. Thus church sanctioned the rule of the king and the king defended the church in return⁴¹. The "Enlightenment" was a diverse movement. It imbibed critical questioning of traditional institutions, customs, and morals, and a strong belief in rationality and science. As Jonathan Israel in his book 'Radical Enlightenment' says, "Enlightenment marks the most dramatic step towards secularization and rationalization in Europe's history..... enlightenment not only attacked and severed the roots of traditional European culture in the sacred, magic, kingship, and hierarchy, secularizing all institutions and ideas, but (intellectually and to a degree in practice) effectively demolished all legitimation of monarchy, aristocracy, woman's subordination to man, ecclesiastical authority, and slavery, replacing these with the principles of universality, equality, and democracy"⁴². Tracing the rise of secularism in Enlightenment Graeme Smith says that 'the Church and Christianity were under assault from all sides. Enlightenment writers such as Voltaire could amusingly and pointedly ridicule the pretensions and pomposity of the French clergy, whilst Hume cast his skeptical eye over proofs for the existence of God. Nietzsche declared that God was dead, killed by humanity, and, more tellingly, Nietzsche trumpeted a will to power over the slave morality of Christianity. Feuerbach, a key influence on Marx, argued that God was a human construction, whilst Marx himself saw religion as a friend of the oppressor and a false comfort to the oppressed. The final nail in the Christian coffin came from Freud, who gave his scientific, psychological explanation for the advent

of religion. It seemed that when humanity achieved good mental health, when it was fully grown up and mature, then religious beliefs could be cast aside like unwanted nursery toys. It had helped humanity in the infancy of its civilization, but now it was time to put away childish things'⁴³. Philosophically enlightenment promoted rationalism. It turned from faith to reason which defined freedom and tolerance. Secondly enlightenment was a process of ethical renewal. Political philosophers like John Locke and Montesquieu gave a powerful importance to individual and subordinated the religion to the autonomy of the individual.

The religious Reformation together with Renaissance antiauthoritarianism shattered religious worldview by advancing scientific enquiry. The discovery that world was round, invention of steam engine, improvement of mechanical clocks, telescope which enabled improved visibility of stars and planets, development of fire arms and ship building opened a new world outlook which relied on rationality rather than religion. Scientists made new claims to authority and objectivity, tending toward explaining the world in mechanical terms. Scientific inquiry complemented secularism and the focus on how to improve material life. Separating the observable world from the spiritual sphere represented a fundamental shift in thought. The growth of science and the application of science reduced man's dependence on religion and the divine interpretation of the universe.

MODERNITY AND THE STATE

Variety of terms are used in social sciences to describe the transformation from pre-modern to modern state system - rationalization, modernization, secularization, industrialization, bureaucratization, democratization, egalitarianism, etc. But the all encompassing term used to describe the socio-political transformation is 'modernity'. It is characterized by comparing pre-modern hierarchical societies with the modern egalitarian societies. In modernity the secularization of society is not just an outcome of the struggle between the Church and the state, but is related to all other facets of social change.

The transition that takes place from pre-modern to modern is crucial to our understanding of secularism.

The significant features of modernity according to Hall Stuart and others are

1. The dominance of secular forms of political power and authority and conceptions of sovereignty and legitimacy, operating within defined territorial boundaries, which are characteristic of the large, complex structures of the modern nation-state.
2. A monetarized exchange economy, based on the large-scale production and consumption of commodities for the market, extensive ownership of private property and the accumulation of capital on a systematic, long-term basis.
3. The decline of the traditional social order, with its fixed social hierarchies and overlapping allegiances, and the appearance of dynamic social and sexual division labour. In modern capitalist societies, this was characterized by new class formation, and distinctive patriarchal relations between men and women.
4. The decline of the religious world view typical of traditional societies and the rise of a secular and materialist culture, exhibiting those individualistic, rationalist, and instrumental impulses now so familiar to us⁴⁴.

Thus in simple terms modernity in a sense is an idea that the present is discontinuous with the past. The transformation that society undergoes through a process of social and cultural change is fundamentally different from the past. It is a contrasting world view. The subordinated masses emerge into public sphere democratizing state, society and spheres of individual life. Rationalism based on empirical proofs, scientific standard to understand and explain reality eroded religious outlook and religious explanation to natural phenomena. The separation of church and state means that institutions of state like government, bureaucracy, and the process of public policy are removed from both direct and indirect religious control. The decline of religion means that religion as interpreted by the dominant religious organization that is 'the church' is no more

the basis for public policy. At the same time it does not mean that religious organization does not have anything to say regarding social, political and religious issues. What it means is that the state as far as possible remains above divergent and incompatible religious beliefs without upholding or advancing any religious doctrine.

This is not to suggest that the rupture of states from the Church and the subsequent transformation was a smooth affair. Wherever ecclesiastical authorities were closely associated with conservative political forces and wielded temporal power, power was not readily handed over local governments. Political revolutions at times through violence as in France accompanied the separation of religious and political institutions. Secularism in modern nation states carried a strong connotation to establish an autonomous and egalitarian political and social sphere which is naturalistic and materialistic and stood in opposition to inegalitarian social structures and a religious realm where the supernatural and faith took precedence.

SECULARIZATION AND THE DECLINE OF RELIGION

Secularization is one of the most important process in the in the history of the modern West. It helps us to differentiate the pre-modern west from the modern nation states. There is a great deal of disagreement on just what really constitutes secularism and secularization. Secularization originally meant the transfer of ecclesiastical property to civil or state ownership, and its first recorded use was apparently after the Thirty Years War in 1648 to mean the transfer of church lands to states. Christian Churches were huge landowners, and religious institutions in non-Christian countries also held or controlled very large properties, which states increasingly nationalized. In England Henry VIII's dissolution of monasteries was a secularizing step. Secularization over time came rather to refer primarily to a process in which religious influence over government, institutions, ideas, and behavior is reduced and reliance on this-worldly bases for these spheres grows. The word secular means "of this world" in Latin and is the opposite of religious. As a doctrine, secularism is usually used

to describe any philosophy which forms its ethics without reference to religious dogmas and which promotes the development of human art and science.

The term secularism came into vogue only in the second half of the 19th century. It was used in 1850 by G.J. Holyoake. It denoted a system 'which seeks to interpret and order life on principles taken solely from this world, without recourse to belief in God and a future life'⁴⁵. This idea was further developed into a form of atheism by C. Bradlaugh. So the development of secularism did have a negative attitude towards organized form of religion i.e., Christianity. But secularism was not limited to being anti religious. Moreover it 'advocated on the positive side social progress and the amelioration of material conditions for the working classes. The term is widely used in a more general sense for the modern tendency to ignore, if not to deny, the principles of supernatural religion in the interpretation of the world and existence'⁴⁶. Holyoake was a famous leader of the English secularist and free thought movement who fought against English blasphemy laws. All those who were not members of his free thought organizations also admired his courage and was a hero of all English radicals. He was also a social reformer who believed that instead of articulating the needs of the individuals' souls or needs of future life the government should work in this life for the poor and working class. His usage of the term secularism did not oppose religion but emphasized this life rather than speculating about after life. He explains: "Secularism is that which seeks the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest possible point, as the immediate duty of life—which inculcates the practical sufficiency of natural morality apart from Atheism, Theism, or the Bible—which selects as its method of procedure the promotion of human improvement by material means, and proposes these positive agreements as the common bond of union, to all who would regulate life by reason and ennoble it by service"⁴⁷.

The focus of secularism was material life rather than spiritual life and this life rather than unknown afterlife. The concept of secularism emphasized non-religious doctrine. It did not articulate total absence of religion. Unfortunately

today in social sciences secularism is used in a very restricted sense, that is, 'it stands in opposition to religion'. But secularism carries a strong connotation for the establishment of autonomous political and social sphere which is free from church and religious realm where the supernatural and faith takes precedence. As states broke away from the clutches of church's suzerainty and Christians slaughtered Christians in the name of rival doctrines an impetus to separate religious and socio-political institutions and build state on non-religious foundations became imperative. Since the time Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire the most important characteristics of western Christianity was to defend the social, political and economic status quo. Natural law derived from stoic philosophers, rationality, humanism became the new doctrines to define the nature and character of secular state.

The process in which the state distances itself being identified with religious institutions and the gradual decline of religion in society is studied under the rubric 'secularization'. Secularization traces the decline of religion and the rise of secular belief systems. But it also touches on the transition from traditional to modern systems of organization, the replacement of metaphysical beliefs with science, the transition from community to association, from fragmentary polities to national states and much more. It is in the modern nation state with secular forms of political power and authority, egalitarianism, secular and materialist world view that one has to locate the gradual decline of religion in modern western societies. Religion which relies in spiritual, super natural and superstitious ideas for legitimacy is undermined by intellectual and scientific development. The emphasis by sociologist who has studied the phenomena of secularization is that as society advances religion retreats.

Berger used the term 'secularisation' to describe a process 'by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols'⁴⁸. Similarly, Wilson applied the term secularisation to 'the process by which religious institutions, actions and consciousness lose their social significance'⁴⁹. He argues that religion has ceased to have any significance

for the working of the social system. This doesn't mean people have not necessarily lost interest in religion nor they have adopted a new ideology.

Momen has noted the impact of secularisation on religion which came into fore in the nineteenth century: "Secularization has gradually permeated the Christian world. It led to the situation in which, by the nineteenth century, Christianity had ceased to have much real influence on the social and political life of Europe. The form was maintained, in that political leaders usually made a great show attending religious ceremonies and was often personally pious. Religion no longer had a role, however, in the shaping of political and social policy. Other considerations and other secular ideologies had taken over. Following the loss of social and political influence, religion became increasingly irrelevant to the lives of ordinary people also"⁵⁰. He says there are five ways of looking at secularization:

1. "Decline of popular involvement in institutionalized religion. This can be seen in the decline in church attendance, with fewer marriages, baptisms and funerals being performed under religious auspices."
2. "The loss of prestige of religious institutions and symbols" and the decline in influence of religious organizations".
3. "The separation of society from the religious world, so that religion becomes purely personal matter."
4. The loss of the idea of the sacred. "As science increases our understanding of humanity and of the world, the area of 'mystery' and the supernatural decrease."
5. "Religious groups themselves become increasingly concerned with the things of this world rather than the spiritual world"⁵¹.

For Frank Lechner "Secularization refers to the historical process in which religion loses social and cultural significance. As a result of secularization the role of religion in modern societies becomes restricted. In secularized societies faith lacks cultural authority, religious organizations have little social power, and

public life proceeds without reference to the supernatural”⁵². Jose Casanovas has summarized the concept of secularisation. They are

1. The separation of religion from politics, economics and science.
2. The privatisation of religion within its own sphere.
3. The declining social significance of religious belief⁵³.

SECULARIZATION AS TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGION

If Berger, Wilson and others have argued the diminishing role of religion in society Martin, Smith and others have argued that religion has not declined but religion has transformed itself. Martin argues for the elimination of the concept of secularization. For him secularization is less a scientific concept and considers secularization in terms of the decline of institutions labeled religious. It is counter ideologies like rationalism, Marxism and existentialism which have replaced religious ideologies. He says, “such ideologies select certain phenomena as really ‘religious’, for the purposes of their own practical politics and according to the logic of their metaphysical systems, and then for similar reasons utilize the notion of inevitability to symbolize their own triumph over such recalcitrant phenomena”⁵⁴. Graeme Smith has argued that secularism is not end of Christianity and secularism it is the latest manifestation of Christianity because it lacks the usual scaffolding we associate with the Christian religion⁵⁵. Modern development of science and technology has functional superiority in resolving technological issues. But it has not able to resolve ethical issues. Christianity has adapted to changing circumstances. Therefore he says ‘people continue to rely on belief in God and a Christian presence to motivate and inspire their pervasive concern for ethics’. He defines secularism as ‘Christian ethics shorn of its doctrine’⁵⁶. According to Smith the theorists of secularization confuse doctrinal religion with belief in supernatural things and god. The general argument that sociologist gives is that during the enlightenment period the intellectual atmosphere changed from the theological to the rational, scientific and technological. But this did not prevent people believing in God and supernatural things. He says

‘majority of people in Contemporary Western society still believe in God’. The explanation that enlightenment has led to the decline religion is riddled with two problems. Firstly atheism has never won anything but paltry support in the West. Secondly, Christianity was not removed from the public square⁵⁷. In public debates Christian ethics continue to dominate. Smith says: “The Church’s debates about the nature of God, Christology, ecclesiology, the Bible, soteriology, salvation history and pneumatology do not concern sociologists, political theorists, economists, philosophers or cultural theorists. If there is explicit public interest in the Church’s teaching, then it is usually around questions of personal sexual morality such as same-sex relationships, abortion, and divorce and re-marriage. What this absence of doctrine means for our history is that if public ethics is shaped by a Christian heritage then at some point in the West’s history this was divorced from doctrinal questions. It has become possible to discuss an ethics derived from Christian belief without also discussing the doctrinal origins and implications of these beliefs. The point of that separation was the Enlightenment”⁵⁸.

The advance of industrialization and modernization led many sociologists to think that religion would disappear. Attendance to church, the number of people taking up full time job of clergy, popularity of religious rites etc is taken as yardstick to measure the degree of religiosity of people from all walks of life. From the empirical survey they have concluded that instead of declining religiosity belief in god, religion is still prevalent even in highly industrial societies. Richard King says that ‘the secularization process that has occurred in modern Western societies since the Enlightenment has not led to the inevitable decline of religion, as some sociologists had prophesied, but rather to the erosion of the authority of institutional religions in the modern era’⁵⁹.

Theorization of secularism and secularization is linked to religion. The place and role of religion in the past few centuries has remarkably changed. The west is secular and secularized. What has changed in the west is the role of religion and religious institution played in pre-modern and modern societies were

entirely different. As Charles Taylor says, “the political organization of all pre-modern societies was in some way connected to, based on, guaranteed by some faith in, or adherence to God, or some notion of ultimate reality”⁶⁰. He describes religious transformation is in fact not a single, continuous transformation, but a series of new departures, in which earlier forms of religious life have been dissolved or destabilized and new ones have been created. It would be erroneous to conclude that secular world is characterized by absence of religion. In some western societies religious belief and practices have declined. But Charles Taylor says individuals have multiple new options like religious, spiritual and anti religious where individuals and groups seize on in order to make sense of their lives and give shape to their spiritual aspirations. Generally secularization is related to the general decline of religion. But what is associated with religion determine the ascendance or descendance of religion. ‘If one identifies this with the great historic faiths, or even with explicit belief in supernatural beings, then it seems to have declined. But if you include a wide range of spiritual and semi-spiritual beliefs; or if you cast your net even wider and think of someone’s religion as the shape of their ultimate concern, then indeed, one can make a case that religion is as present as ever’⁶¹. In the middle ages Popes could bring to knees emperors and kings. After the Reformation this has become impossible. Secularization as decline in religion means the institutional form of religion embodied in the Roman Church henceforth cannot dictate terms to political authorities and monolithic interpretation of scriptures. States emerged in the west by proclaiming liberation from Papal authority. Secondly the decline of religion in the societies of emerging states is ‘not only a change occurring in society, it is also a change of society in its basic organization’⁶². Secularization does not mean the disappearance of religion but the role the religion played in pre modern societies have declined. As Bryan Wilson puts it: “Religion, which I mean the invocation of the supernatural, was the ideology of community. In every context of traditional life, we may see religious symbolism and religious performances used to celebrate and legitimate local life. There were religious

procedures to protect the local settlement; there were super natural agents to whom the family or the clan and its members could relate; by reference to religion men were reassured of their power, secured in their status, justified in their wealth, or consoled for their poverty. Religion could give the best guarantees of fertility for mankind and the abundance of the means of sustenance. It provided the means for according public recognition and identification to the young; for healing the sick; for inducing respect for the elderly; and for coping with bereavement. Its points of reference were to things local (some of which were, of course, also things universal). It built on biological basis of relationship, and its language was often the language of the emotions, conspicuously so in Christianity, with its symbolism of father, brethren, mother, and child. In its higher forms at least religion intimated an ethic for social comportment, provided the basis for shared moral expectations and moralizing exhortation. All of these one-time functions of religion have declined in significance”⁶³.

Charles Taylor argues for the imperativeness of secularism for modern nation states. Locating the Christian roots to the development of secularism he claims that it is out of the tiredness of religious war between the Protestants and the Roman Catholic’s that secularism became an imperative in the political development of Europe. Secondly the need for secularism was felt for a ground of co-existence for Christians of different confessional persuasion. This meant that irrespective of the individuals religious, sect or heretic allegiance the state would not give precedence to any religion and ‘public domain had to be regulated by certain norms or agreements which were independent of confessional allegiance’⁶⁴.

Within the individuals multiple religious allegiances the state demanded obedience to legitimate authority. This was done according to Charles Taylor in two different ways: Firstly through common ground strategy. This was grounded on natural which was dependent on theism common to all religious sects. ‘The aim was to establish a certain ethic of peaceful co-existence and political order, a set of grounds for obedience, which while still theistic, even

Christian, was based on those doctrines which were common to all Christian sects, or even to all theists'. Secondly by defining independent political ethic. This is based on the assumption that all human beings are rational creatures and one can deduce certain norms which can include peace as well as political obedience. As Grotius puts it even if God did not exist these norms would be binding on us. Hobbes demands that Christian faith as confessionally defined irrelevant to public sphere.

Pushing the religion out of public sphere meant according to Charles Taylor 'not only that the state upholds no religious goals' but also 'to prevent from backing one confession rather than another'. But the two different ways that secularism developed in the west has weakened says Charles Taylor. The common ground approach gets etiolated and challenges the independent ethic with the widening and diversification of religious and metaphysical commitments⁶⁵.

If the common ground approach and the independent ethic is riddled with the problems with the rise of multi religious sects and multi religious allegiance Charles Taylor puts forward a third approach which he calls 'Overlapping Consensus'. Instead of building secular base on common ground approach of independent ethic the third approach is based on purely political ethic i.e., doctrine of human rights, popular sovereignty, freedom and equality⁶⁶.

The overlapping consensus that Taylor argues is to be located in the nature of modern nation state. Inspired by Andersons' pioneering work on nationalism Taylor remarks that modern nation states are 'Imagined Communities' i.e. socially shared ways in which social spaces are imagined. This has two important features

1. In modern nation states there is a shift from 'hierarchical mediated access societies of horizontal direct access societies'. What it implies is that in the pre modern states society was hierarchically organised based on birth and the access to resources was based on their hierarchical position. The transformation that takes place in modern states is that the hierarchy is

replaced by equality based on citizenship. Taylor puts it very sharply – “modernity has involved among other things, a revolution in our social imaginary, the relegation of these forms of mediacy to the margins and the diffusion of images of direct access”.

2. The second important feature of modern state is that ‘modern social imaginary no longer sees the greater trans local entities as grounded in something other, something higher, than common action in secular time’⁶⁷.

So it would be misleading to conclude that religion all together disappears in the process of secularization. Secular modern west should be seen as twin product of disintegration of Latin Christendom and societal secularization within national boundaries. Societal secularization that sociologists have analyzed within the national state boundaries differed from one state to another. Modern states are nation states. It is in the nation states that secularism is practiced. Nationalism in the west encouraged secularism. If secularism stands for transformed state and secularization for transformed society the political crystallization of this transformation is nation state. Anderson says nation is politically imagined community ‘because, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’⁶⁸. Equality and egalitarianism is the foundation on which modern secular nation states have been built.

To conclude secularism is not just about the separation of church and the state. It is part of the project of modernity. Great movements like Renaissance and Reformation which emerged in the 16th and 17th centuries emphasized their faith in reason. It became the basis of almost all aspects of human and social thinking. The new emerging middle class played a progressive role against the feudal class. It gave importance to science, reason progress and equality in place of religion, faith and salvation, aristocratic order. This world was given more importance rather than ‘that world’. The newly emerged class played a progressive role in science, art, philosophy, and politics. In contrast to the feudal order their social and moral values were more progressive. The jurisdictional separation of the states and the church was a consequence of the emergence

of national states. The revolutionary ideas of Hobbes, Bodin, scientific discoveries of Newton, Galileo and invention of paper and gun powder all helped the kings in their struggle against papacy and the feudal order. With the support of the middle class despotic monarchs like Queen Elizabeth in England and Louis XIV in France unified national states and established strong national sovereign states by struggling against the feudal order as well as the Church. The emergence of national sovereign states and the rise of nationalism crushed the old feudal order and the supremacy of the church. In this struggle, the mass of the citizens took sides with the king. The universal authority of church also collapsed with the advent of new nation states which were secular in character.

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CHAPTER - III

COLONIAL INTERVENTION: FORMATION OF STATE AND RELIGION IN INDIA

The most essential element that enters into the concept of secularism is the relationship between state and religion. Religion has been one of the powerful ideologies that have played a dominating role in the evolution of state and society. In the evolution of states the gap between state and religion was very marginal. All pre modern states had a close relationship between religions and at times it was difficult to distinguish between the two. The state was legitimized by religion or at times the ruler itself proclaimed divinity. In the history of evolution of states religion has played the dual role of legitimizing the status of the ruler as well as the social order. State is just not geographical entity. Annexation of a territory is the annexation of the inhabitants of the territory, their institutions, cultures, customs and traditions and building political structures over them. The political structures built over the social institutions and deriving legitimacy from them constitutes the state. The link between the social and the political cannot be ignored in the analysis of secularism.

Tracing the evolution of state in India in the political reforms, initiated under the colonial rule and its culmination in the adoption of a liberal constitution, has been the thrust of social scientists in general and Political scientists in particular. The liberal principles incorporated in the constitution have become the benchmark to understand, analyze and interpret the post-independent state and politics. Principles of democracy, secularism, republicanism, sovereignty, socialism enshrined in the preamble, fundamental rights like right to equality, freedom, religion guaranteed in part III of the constitution, welfare principles embodied in the Directive Principles of State Policy, practice of parliamentary-federal politics is the established frame work to look at the modern liberal – democratic state and politics in India. The juridical-legal approach to the emergence of state in India

has its merits in locating the emergence and growth of representative institutions and political institutions of governance. But it fails to grasp the relationship between state and the dominant religion of the majority – Hinduism.

Secularism is about the relationship between the state and religion. Looking at the transformation of state in the adoption of the constitution is misleading. Constitutional guarantee to religious practices and beliefs and the incorporation of secularism into the constitution do not determine the secular character of the Indian state. The process of transformation of secular state has to be examined in the dynamics of colonial interaction with the fragmented society and polity. The historical process of formation of the state under colonialism has crystallized the modern Indian state and identities. Without bringing the dialectical relationship between the state and religion, our understanding of the state formation and secularism will be incomplete.

Hence, a critical study of the development of state in its structure of modern administrative governance - the bureaucracy, the laws, representative institutions along with the non - material changes i.e. growth of religion, religious communities during the colonial period is important to understand the evolution of state and secularism. Such an understanding is imperative because the pan - Indian polity that evolved under colonialism was inherited by the nationalist in 1947.

An Indian State has been defined as any State in India which was under the protection or political control of the British Crown. Also those princely states which acknowledged the supremacy of the British government were considered part of the Indian state. But such kind of state did not exist in the 16th or 17th centuries but by the middle of 18th century Indian state was a reality. Though one can locate pan Indian polity in pre modern kingdoms of Mauryas¹ founded by Chandragupta and extended by his successors Bindusara who ruled vast territories of the sub continent, their empire did not last beyond their life time. Even to trace modern polity to ancient and medieval kingdoms would be misleading because the political structures, bureaucracy, police, army, judiciary, representative institutions were initiated by the British. The stabilized state structures were inherited by the nationalist in 1947 which was further expanded, centralized and extended to all the areas that hitherto were under the indirect rule

of the colonial state. Wars, treaties and annexation policies brought the political unification of fragmented polities into a pan-Indian polity. Along with the political unification the company introduced modern bureaucratic administration. Profit was the main concern of the British and the men who administered the territory for the East India Company were more inclined to profiteering than to establish an effective government. With the territorial expansion profiteering coincided with the modern bureaucratic rule. As eminent historian Ravinder Kumar says “....For the first time in the history of India, the British Imperium created a weberian bureaucracy of imposing strength and resilience, which linked the apex of colonial polity, in the person of the viceroy, to members of bureaucratic corporation, who were based in territorial units called districts and sub districts, each one of which was made up of a couple of hundred or more villages. Below the lower most rungs of this formidable administrative machine stood a pre colonial bureaucracy of indigenous origin, whose members were drawn into the service of the new state on the basis of connections and local influence; rather than by virtue of the merit and skills which inform a modern bureaucracy”². Two hundred years of colonial rule had completely transformed the Indian economy, society and polity. The British colonial policies had adverse consequences for the Indian society and polity. The British had gradually laid the foundation of a modern state in India. They created a modern bureaucracy, army and police, instituted law courts and codified laws. They developed communication, railways, postal systems, telegraphs, roads and canals. Schools and colleges were also established. Though these changes were designed to benefit the British imperial interests it had far reaching consequences.

It is these structures of administration and the beneficiaries of these political changes that characterize the pan-Indian state. A critical study of the secularism in India has to take into account not only the growth and influence of expanding colonial state but also the radical changes that religion and caste underwent in the colonial period. In this chapter the following questions are raised and analyzed. What were the socio-political formations before the colonial political unification? What was the relationship between the state and religion in India? What are the institutional and religious changes that took place in the colonial period and lastly what were socio-political impacts of colonial policies?

PRE – COLONIAL POLITIES

Pre - British India was a congeries of states. What we see today, a unified centralized political structure never existed before the advent of the British. In Indian history one can locate empires extending their dominion all over the sub continent. The first of these empires was Mauryan dynasty (324-185 BC). After its decline and political fragmentation we see the rise of another empire Gupta dynasty (AD 319) after another five centuries. The collapse of the Gupta Empire resulted in the emergence of small major powers of Rajputs and the Delhi sultanate in the north and the Vijyanagar and Bhamini kingdoms in the south. The political fragmentation into innumerable states faced the advent of the Europeans and Mughals in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century - the conquest by the Portuguese lured by spices in 1498 and the Mughals invasion led by Babar in 1526. Only the latter established an empire subjugating almost the entire subcontinent which was then succeeded by another European power the British. Its decline in the seventeenth century during its last powerful ruler Aurangzeb saw the emergence of small states which could neither expand nor build a powerful state to resist the expansion of the British Empire.

Empire, fragmentation and empire was the hallmark of state formation in India. India is a land of multiple religions, languages, cultures, customs and traditions. When empires come into existence it overrides the diversity of language, religion and customs resulting in their assertion. Centripetal tendencies are born in the womb of the centrifugal tendencies of the empire. The national states in Europe in the eighteenth century emerged out of the pan-Christianizing religion of the church. Similarly it is said that the revolt against the Mughals in the last days of Aurangzeb's rule was a result of political assertion of regional and communitarian identities which paved the way for the formation of regional state³. "The peasant grievances in late Mughal period were.....organised around religious and regional identities. The Maratha sardars took advantage of the peasant grievances. The Jat peasants were mobilized in north India by their zamindars; the Sikhs rose in revolt in Punjab; and the Rajput chiefs withdrew their allegiance in Rajasthan. All these revolts led to the formation of autonomous kingdoms in different parts of the empire, further attenuating the authority of the Mughals. The eighteenth century thus witnessed the rise of a variety of regional

states, some of which built on 'older local or regional traditions of state formation', others focused on ethnic identity and associated 'notions of community'⁴ says Sekhar Bandyopadhyay.

Bengal, Hyderabad and Awadh are the three states that seceded from the Mughal Empire. They were founded by rebel provincial governors. Apart from these rebelled provincial governors who formed independent states, Marathas, Sikhs, the Jats and Afghan kingdoms of Farukhabad and Rohilkand were the new emerging regional states. Besides these rebel regional kingdoms few principalities which enjoyed autonomy and declared independence were the kingdoms of Rajputs, Mysore and Travancore.

At the time of British expansion in the eighteenth century India there was no pan Indian state. There was neither centralized political structure nor powerful ruler who could threaten and integrate small states. The regional states that emerged on the ruins of Mughal empire seeking protection, stability, expansion and supremacy looked at the East India Company as another force and aligned with them against other native states and at times with the native states against the British. Like the previous rulers who had invaded and annexed India the British took advantage of the political fragmentation and political rivalry among the native rulers. Many states entered into alliance for protection and expansion. In the first Anglo-Mysore war the Marathas and Nizam were with the British against Haider Ali; in the second they joined hands with Haider against the British. But again the two powers sided with the British in 1790 against Tipu Sultan.

COLONIAL EXPANSION

The expansion of British Empire in India was not systematic. Its territorial expansion was 'erratic and piecemeal'⁵. The English East India Company a joint stock company of London Merchants was founded by a royal charter on 31 December 1600. It started trading in India from 1613. By the end of seventeenth century it extended its activities to three major centers i.e, Bombay, Calcutta and Bombay. Instability and political fragmentation following the decline of the Mughal kingdom facilitated the political expansion to protect their trading interest. From the middle of eighteenth century and within hundred years almost

the whole of India was under its control. The Battle of Plassey in 1757 marked the beginning of political supremacy of the English East India Company in India⁶.

Having gained a foothold in the local politics of regional states and gradually asserting its military power the company expanded its territorial jurisdiction. With the Anglo Mysore wars and the Anglo Maratha wars 'the English East India Company had now complete mastery over all the territories south of Vindhya'⁷. Victory at the Battle of Buxar and the Anglo Sikh war enabled the British to annex the north western provinces. Apart from war, two important policies the subsidiary alliance and Doctrine of Lapse pursued by the company helped in integrating more states into the empire. According to the Subsidiary Alliance a princely state shall not enter into any relationship between European powers, a contingent of company army would be stationed and the provision for its maintenance came from its treasury. Doctrine of Lapse was a policy where there was no male heir to the ruler was annexed to the Company Raj. By these policies the state of Mysore, Waynad, Coimbatore, Canara, Jhansi and Sindh were annexed by the Company. The Company stationed an army or appointed an English Resident in all the annexed territories. Indirect rule was enforced where ever the newly acquired territories were not annexed by the empire. As Bandyopadhyay remarks: "By 1857 the Company had annexed about sixty three percent of the territories of the Indian subcontinent and subordinated over 78 percent of its population. The remaining territories were left in charge of Indian princes..... Its policies by now had shifted from those of annexation to that of indirect rule"⁸.

POLICE AND THE ARMY

The backbone of colonial expansion and administration was the police and the Army. Taking away the policing duties from the zamindars the British introduced a regular police force to maintain law and order which was called the daroga system. The British established a system of circles or thanas headed by a daroga, who was an Indian. Later, the post of the District Superintendent of Police was created to head the police organization in a district. Though the superior posts were exclusive privilege of the British, Indians filled the lower posts. The police gradually succeeded in reducing major crimes such as dacoity.

It is said that one of the major achievements of the new police force was the suppression of thugs who robbed and killed travelers on the highways, particularly in Central India. The police also prevented the organization of a large-scale conspiracy against foreign control, and when the national movement arose, the police was used to suppress it. Though the zamindars were relieved of police duties the new dorga could not function effectively ignoring the landed zamindars. As a result we find the emergence of daroga-zamindar nexus that became 'new instrument of coercion and oppression'. When this system was formally abolished a regular police force under the supervision of an Inspector General with district Superintendent of Police was established. While the rank and file were Indians the officers were Europeans⁹. The police continued to be drawn from locally dominant castes and to be the agents of local agrarian elites¹⁰.

Whenever the police could not control the mounting resistance and rebellions the colonial state always had the army to take control. The recruitment of Indian army went hand in hand with the expansion of the British Empire in India. It fulfilled two important functions. It was the instrument through which it defended the British Empire in India from foreign rivals and it safeguarded British supremacy from the ever-present threat of internal revolt. The bulk of the Company's army consisted of Indian soldiers, recruited chiefly from the area at present included in U.P. and Bihar¹¹. Its officers were exclusively British, but majority of the soldiers were Indians. For instance, in 1857, the strength of the army in India was 3, 11,400 of whom 2, 65,900 were Indians. A large number of Indian troops had to be employed as British troops were far too expensive and the population of Britain was perhaps too small to provide the large soldiery needed for the conquest of India. The army was officered entirely by British officials and a certain number of British troops were maintained to keep the Indian soldiers under control.

The Indian sepoy were trained and disciplined by European standards and commanded by British officers. Indians who joined the army found it very attractive for two reasons. First the pay and perks were better than what the regional states offered them. Secondly for a few upper castes it was a means of social mobility. In recruiting Indian sepoy the British was over cautious in not disturbing the caste configurations of the army. Though the British preferred the

Anglicization of the army, they did not disturb the caste configuration of the army, 'as a result, the Company came to possess a high caste army'. As S.Bandyopadhyay says "During the initial formative phase, Hastings did not want to disturb the existing caste rules in the affairs of the army. So the Company's army consisted mainly of upper caste Brahman and Rajput land peasants from Awadh and the Rajput landed peasants from Awadh and the Rajput and Bhumi-har-Brahman peasants from north and south Bihar.....These people joined the Company's army because the pay, allowances, pension and resettlement provisions offered by the Company were much better than those offered by the regional states.....The deliberate policy of respecting caste, dietary, travel other religious practices of the sepoys fostered a high caste identity of the Company's army. By joining it many of the upcoming socially ambitious castes – like the Bhumi-har-Brahmans- could fulfill their aspirations for social mobility"¹².

INTERVENTION IN POLITY

British colonial conquest should not be seen simply as the elimination of princely states and subjugation of the natives. It has to be seen as an agency which introduced state structures like civil service, judicial institutions, army and the police. It formed various policies related to the state, culture, religion and the society. The modernization of the state and the formulation of various policies was not an unilateral programme of the British but a collaborative project with the Indian elites. The inter-relationship between the British and the Indian elites represent the different patterns of colonial intervention in India. Colonial ideology and policies had different impact and the people responded to them differently at different points of time. The changing patterns of social, economic, political and religious development in consequence crystallized the subsequent political development in India.

When the British first gained a foothold on the Indian subcontinent in the 18th century their concern was profit. The men who administered the territory for the East India Company were more inclined to profiteering than to attempting to establish an effective government. By the beginning of the 19th century a series of conquests expanded the territory held by the British and the idea of administering began to creep into the thinking of the individuals charged with governing British India. Expansion brought political unification. The socio-politico-

religious changes that India underwent with the emergence of unified polity under colonialism are crucial to the critical understanding of secularism in India. The emergence of pan Indian state and the politics of religion of the majority under colonialism is the context of understanding secularism in India. Pre colonial India was not only a congeries of states but also states with different vernacular languages, religion, culture, customs and traditions.

The political unification brought direct rule of the British Raj in the annexed territories and indirect rule in the princely states. The princely states enjoyed their autonomy by the treaties they had signed with the Company. When the crown took over the Company's administration the treaties and their suzerainty was respected. But the princely states were well integrated into the imperial polity. According to K.M. Panikkar the causes for the extension of the imperial authority over the state were due firstly to the geographical unification of India following the construction of the main lines of railways, posts and telegraphs. Secondly, the political unification of India by the growth of an imperial administrative machinery, the creation of legislative institutions and the great legal codes. Thirdly, the development of economic unity by the growth of industrialism, banking system and the wide international importance of trade, currency, etc¹³. The direct rule implied that there are no intermediaries ie., kings or princes. The British established a modern bureaucratic apparatus based on written laws, courts and representative institutions.

The decline of the Mughal kingdom and subsequent wars had destroyed the Mughal structures of administration. Ruling to extract maximum revenue without disturbing the indigenous institutions and social structures became the agenda of the rule of the Company. The Company had, over a time acquired many of the attributes of a state. 'It could wage war, make peace, raise taxes, and administer justice to its own employees and to increasing numbers of Indians who inhabited the territories in which the company was acting as the sovereign'¹⁴. In the process of collecting revenue and administering the territory, the Company ruled and claimed legitimacy in India from 'grants received or extracted from Indian rulers' like the grant of Dewani of Bengal in 1765 which made the 'Company responsible agent for assessment and collection of the revenues of Bengal'¹⁵. It reshaped political authority in India by establishing centralized political structures

replacing Mughal decentralized structures. This brought the company in direct contact to settle civil disputes. The dilemma of the Company to administer justice in the newly acquired territories was the lack of written laws. To get first-hand knowledge as to how an Indian state functioned, the first Governor General Warren Hastings believed that 'Indian knowledge and experience as embodied in the varied textual traditions of the Hindus and Muslims were relevant for developing British administrative institutions'¹⁶.

MODERN EDUCATION AND CIVIL SERVICE

Major changes occurred in the administrative field. If maximum surplus was to be extracted colonial administration had to penetrate the interior towns and villages and the agricultural produce was to be drawn out of them. Modern education was introduced basically with a view to man the new vastly expanded administrative machinery. The British completely neglected modern technical education which was necessary for the development of modern industries. Colonial education policy emphasized English as the medium of instruction instead of vernacular languages. English education not only prevented the spread of education to the masses but also created a wide linguistic and cultural gulf between the educated and the masses. Since education was the monopoly of the Brahmins, modern English education now became the new source of secular empowerment. Moreover education became a virtual monopoly of the Brahmins and other twice born castes.

The Civil Service was brought into existence by Lord Cornwallis. In the beginning the East India Company carried on its trade through servants who were paid low wages but who were permitted to trade privately. Later, when the Company became a territorial power, the same servants assumed administrative functions. The English servants lacked knowledge of Indian languages. Collection of revenue, land measurement etc by the British required the help of the native population. So to help the English servants in administration and training the natives in English the British established colleges. The young educated Indians were recruited to the Civil Service. Indians were excluded in the higher grades of services. But they were recruited in large numbers to fill subordinate posts. Gradually the Indian Civil Service became the 'steel frame' rearing and sustaining British rule in India. The Indian civil servants became a proud caste with an extremely conservative and narrow outlook.

The expanding bureaucracy required educated men who could be employed. 'From ancient times the higher casts of India had been the administrators of literati of their communities. Since higher education under the British was to offer employment which was traditionally theirs, the new elites moved unansweringly down these avenues of advancement'¹⁷. The British policy was also conducive to the upper caste interest. Elphinstone who inspired the foundation of the college at Bombay favoured the preservation of Brahminical heritage of the Marathas since he feared widespread education among the lower would bring disaffection among the upper castes, the ruling forces of the society¹⁸. The new educated class basically drawn from the literate caste moved into professional jobs like journalism, medicine, teaching and law. The early supporters of Congress were the members of legal professionals and their client¹⁹.

With the decline in the prosperity in land arising from division of land, many priestly and literate castes thronged to English high schools to get just enough education to fit them for clerical jobs. This class the British called 'the professional agitators' sprang from among the 'hungry' but educated 'mal contents' whose numbers swelled annually²⁰. Other than getting into bureaucracy educated class was neither interested in mass education or economic development. Moreover the brown bureaucracy largely remained Brahminical, dominated by upper castes²¹. Its influence however was limited to certain big cities and large towns. The rural area which constituted 80% of the population did not experience any impact of the bureaucracy. Since India's tradition of caste authoritarianism fitted in well with the imperial scheme of things, Indian bureaucrats who usually belong to higher castes, were quick to step into the shoes of British who left India²².

CODIFICATION OF RELIGIOUS LAWS

In the beginning the basic feature of colonial rule was non-intervention. No basic changes were introduced in administration, judicial system, transport and communication, agriculture or industrial production. All the initial changes that were introduced were to extract maximum surplus. To control the affairs of the Company and restore the prosperity of the company's territory the parliamentary committee argued for introducing British law and institutions as they did not find any law and institutions. Hastings argued against the introduction of British law

as it was 'too technical, too complicated and totally inappropriate for the Indian conditions'²³. He dismissed the notion that India did not have written laws and hence was ruled by arbitrary wills of the temporary rulers. He vociferously pointed out that the Brahmans the "professors of law" "had in possession of laws which continued unchanged from remotest antiquity". According to him the professors of law and the laws of constitution could be found all over India and were supported by 'public endowments and benefactions' and it was 'left unmolested even by Muslim governments'²⁴. Warren Hastings found ancient Indian constitution intact and Hindus were 'in possession of laws which continued unchanged from remotest antiquity'. He said 'we have endeavored to adapt our Regulations to the Manners and Understandings of the People, and the Exigencies of the Country, adhering as closely as we are able to their ancient uses and Institutions'²⁵. It was the endeavor of Hastings and the British to find the unmolested, pristine, antique Hindu law as an 'ancient constitution'. To rule by law, the ancient constitution of Hindus scattered all over India among the scattered professors of law had to be compiled and made accessible to the British.

The process of ruling through the ancient laws led to unearthing, compiling and translating Sanskrit and Persian texts into English. For the project of translation and support for governance the alien rulers turned for assistance from indigenous Brahman and brahmanized administrative elites or from local warriors like Rajputs of Rajasthan, Marathas of Maharashtra, Telega, Velama, Kamma, and Reddi Nayakas of Telengana, or Vellalar lords of Tamilaham²⁶. 'These elites, especially those who were bureaucrats and bankers, came from scores of separate castes in various parts of the continent. They provided alien rulers with many age-old secrets of statecraft, secrets especially appropriate to local conditions' says Frykenberg²⁷.

Religious 'personal laws' of the dominant Hindu and Muslim communities were unearthed and codified to rule through modern bureaucracy. First of these translated works in the series was the publication of the collection of Shastric texts in 1773 by eleven pandits under the supervision of N.B.Halhed. The collaborated work was finished in 1775 and it was called *Vivadarnava-setu*, or 'bridge across the ocean of litigation' and later it acquired the alternative title

Vivadarnava-bhanjana, 'breakwater to the ocean of litigation'. The English version was published in 1776 as '*A Code of Gentoo Laws* subtitled *Ordinations of the Pundits*'²⁸. This covered 'Debt, Inheritance, Civil Procedure, Deposits, Sale of a Stranger's Property, Partnership, Gift, Slavery, Master and Servant, Rent and Hire, Sale, Boundaries, Shares in Cultivation of Lands, Cities and Towns and Fines for Damaging Crops, Defamation, Assault, Theft, Violence, Adultery, Duties of Women, Miscellaneous Rules'²⁹. Continuing the process of compiling and translation J.Z Holwell published *Religious Tenets of the Gentoos* in 1767 and Sir William Jones and H.T.Colebrooks published detailed descriptions of Indian belief in *Asiatick Researches*³⁰. For further consultation pundits were appointed in courts. In lieu to the British efforts of putting together the shastric texts pandit holding high appointments also published books with commentaries³¹. The efforts of the British in unearthing the Brahminical texts into English was to overcome 'Brahman pundits.....divergent interpretations of the various schools of dharmasastras 'because the Brahman pundits' opinions on the same law varied widely from case to case'³². This English version of dharmasastras brought certainty and uniformity in the system which had conflicting varying interpretations. The standardization of law and its uniform application bulldozed the divergent regional laws that had existed in the fragmented polities of pre-British India. In 1778 a code of Muslim laws was also compiled.

JUDICIAL ORGANISATION

The British laid the foundations of a new system of dispensing justice through a hierarchy of civil and criminal courts. Beginning with the Mayor's Court, established in 1727 for civil litigation in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, justice in the interior came under the company's jurisdiction. In 1772 an elaborate judicial system, known as *adalat*, established civil and criminal jurisdictions along with a complex set of codes or rules of procedure and evidence. Establishment of judicial organization was started by Warren Hastings and later stabilized by Cornwallis in 1793. In each district was established a Diwani Adalat, or civil court, presided over by the District Judge who belonged to the Civil Service. Cornwallis thus separated the posts of the Civil Judge and the collector. Appeal from the District Court lay first to four Provincial Courts of Civil Appeal and then, finally, to the Sadar Diwani Adalat. Below the District

Courts were Registrars' Courts, headed by Europeans, and a number of subordinate courts headed by Indian judges known as Munsifs and Amins.

To deal with criminal cases, Cornwallis divided the Presidency of Bengal into four Divisions, in each of which a court of Circuit presided over by the civil servants was established. Below these courts came a large number of Indian magistrates to try petty cases. The criminal courts applied respective Hindu and Muslim Criminal Laws. The civil courts applied the customary law that had prevailed in any area or among a section of the people since time immemorial. Both Hindu pandits and Muslim *qazis* (sharia court judges) were recruited to aid the presiding judges in interpreting their customary laws. The legal profession provided numerous opportunities for educated upper castes Indian lawyers who later dominated nationalist politics and reform movements. Establishment of modern courts did not mean that modern laws came into force. Hindus and Muslims were given the right to follow native custom and law in personal matters such as inheritance, marriage and succession.

The British established a new system of laws through the processes of enactment and codification of old laws. The traditional system of justice in India that had been largely based on customary law - shastras and shariat was continued by the imperial authority. They continued to observe customary law in general until a new system of laws was evolved. They introduced regulations, codified the existing laws, and often systematized and modernized them through judicial interpretation.

INTERVENTION IN AGRICULTURE

Parallel to the codification of Brahmanic texts to determine civil laws revenue collection was the company's most essential administrative function. The British brought about important transformation in India's agricultural economy which had far reaching consequences for the peasantry. The changes brought in agriculture and revenue collection were not with a view to improving Indian agriculture but rather to obtain land revenue and extract maximum surplus available in agriculture.

The British introduced three systems of land revenue administration – the Permanent Settlement in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the Ryotwari system in Madras and the Mahalwari system in Punjab, Central India, Sind, Assam and

Coorg. Lord Cornwallis introduced Permanent Settlement in Bengal and Thomas Munro in Madras Ryotwari settlement. The aim was to consolidate company's state and expanding its revenue base. The zamindars in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were just revenue collectors and never owned land. The Permanent Settlement in 1796 made them the land owners ignoring the customary occupancy rights. In fact earlier land had belonged to peasantry who enjoyed hereditary occupancy rights³³. The new owners of land were banias, inferior zamindars and taluqdars who had no interest in the land nor the welfare of the cultivators. They preferred to lease portions of their property to others who in turn played the role of rentiers so that with a short span of time, as many as four or five layers of parasitic intermediaries stood between a great zamindar, who tendered account to British government for an estate bequeathed to him in perpetuity, and the humble tenant in the village, who cultivated a few acres to the barest of subsistence for himself and his dependants³⁴.

The Ryotwari experiment in Madras collected revenue directly from the villagers instead of the zamindars. But this system did not eliminate village elites-intermediaries between the government and the peasantry. As privileged rents and special rights of the mirasidars were recognized and caste privileges of the Brahmans respected, the existing village power structure was hardly altered, and indeed even more strengthened by the new system³⁵. Areas where the Mahalwari Settlement was introduced consisted of owner cultivators, large proprietors of several villages and small groups of magnates known as taluqdars whom Nurul Hasan calls 'intermediary zamindars'. Similar to the permanent settlement, the British collected revenue through the taluqdars and eventually they were made permanent. High estimation of revenue assessment resulted in the default of payment. The taluqdars were ruthlessly liquidated and the land auctioned. The auctioned land was bought by non cultivating merchants and bankers who were outsiders to the village community.

The Permanent Settlement, the Ryotwari system or the Mahalwari system – ultimately made the peasants the real sufferers as they were forced to pay very high rents. They were compelled to pay many illegal dues and were then required to perform forced labour or begar. The government came to occupy the position of the landlord and it ruined agriculture to such an extent that it resulted

in the pauperization of the peasantry. Landlords, money lenders and merchants made deep inroads into the village that resulted in further ruin of the peasant cultivators. Because of the high revenue rates demanded and the rigid manner of collection, the peasant cultivator had often to borrow money to pay taxes. The money-lender, on the other hand could manipulate the new judicial system and the administrative machinery to his advantage. In this regard the Government facilitated them because without him the land revenue could not be collected in time, nor could the agricultural produce be exported. Secondly even to get the commercial crops for export produced, the Government depended on the moneylender to persuade the cultivator by offering to finance him through loans. In course of time the moneylender began to occupy a dominant position in the rural economy. In both the Zamindari and the Ryotwari areas, there occurred a large-scale transfer of land from the hands of the actual cultivators to the hands of money-lenders, merchants, officials and rich peasants. This led to landlordism becoming the dominant feature of land relationships all over the country and the emergence of the moneylender as an influential economic and political force in the country.

TRANSFORMATION IN ECONOMY

The colonisation of the economy increased the opportunities for many upper caste Hindus to start modern business which was unknown to them. Apart from Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaishyas of Bengal were first beneficiaries of the colonial expansion³⁶. As the British went on expanding by defeating local Kings and chieftains the Indian merchants thrived by being brokers or banians. The banians not only benefitted by collaborating with the company but also by serving in other ways. Gokul Ghoushal was the banian to Governor Verclat, Krishnakant Nandi to Warren Hastings and Sykes. Bernosi Ghosh was dewan to the Collector of Calcutta and lent money to the Company's servants for their own private trade. Jamesiti Jiji Bhai, the first Indian baronet who owned ships and big ship building dock, and invested in newspapers and joint-stock banks was the confidential advisor to many Governors of Bombay. The Parsis became rich being contractors for British, supplying grain and other commodities to their cantonments lending money to their soldiers and officers. After the advent of the British in the east the Marwaris of Maharashtra moved to Assam³⁷.

Most of the banias invested in land and founded big zamindari families. In Bengal professional and commercial interests were interwoven with economic interests in land and this class proved to be more oppressive than the old zamindars. In Bombay and Madras presidencies the old literary classes held considerable interest in land. In North-western Province the Rajputs, with some Brahmins constituted the bulk of under proprietors, including proprietors of Mahals³⁸. This professional and commercial class in the cities was the great driving force which sought to create a new unity, a nationalist unity, among different sectors of society in the sub-continent. In their attempt to forge this unity, Ravinder Kumar says that the professional and commercial classes used their linkages with rural society to great effect³⁹.

Marx and Engels wrote in Communist Manifesto: 'the bourgeoisie, wherever it has got upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relationship'⁴⁰. But in India the capitalist did not emerge by struggling against feudal forces, instead derived strength from it and sustained by depending on feudal lords and princes. One of the chief sources of capital for industries came from feudal princes like Gwalior, Mysore, Baroda, Indore and Travancore, and from big landlords like Maharajas of Darbhanga and Bardhan⁴¹. The Indian big bourgeoisie itself was involved in feudal land ownership and extraction of rent. Many of them have been big landlords and usurers⁴².

The capitalist class basically drawn from superior castes did not change the traditional consciousness. Speaking the language of modernity and practicing modern business, the emerging bourgeoisie had sacred ideas about caste system and the traditional caste practices. The Indian managing houses such as the Birlas, the Tatas, the Dalmias and the Thapars appointed directors and managers, secretaries and engineers from their region and caste⁴³. G.D.Birla said that he thought 'caste is what holds this country together. Abolish caste and India is in trouble'. His brother B.M. Birla wrote to Vallabhai Patel on 5th June, 1947 (immediately after the plan for transfer of power was adopted): "Is it not time that we should consider Hindustan as a Hindu state with Hinduism as the State Religion"⁴⁴. Moreover untouchability was practiced in industries. The 1886 – 87 memorandum of Jones pointed out that 'the general run of hands will not work with lower castes and the latter have to be kept in certain parts of rooms to

themselves and in some cases in a separate building'. Though lower castes made a representation to Bombay government complaining against high caste Hindus and appealed for government employment in public service, the government refused because the caste Hindu officials would neither associate with them nor allow others to work with them⁴⁵. The lower castes were not only depressed socially but also economically.

COLONIAL RELIGIOUS POLICY

Officially British policy was maintenance of religious neutrality. Non interference and maintaining religious neutrality meant the reinforcement and discharging the role of pre colonial Hindu and Muslim rulers. The East India Company replacing the displaced native rulers 'pledged itself to the continuation of all the rights, privileges, and immunities which had been enjoyed under the former Hindu or Muslim ruler. As the Indian prince had given grants and endowments for religious purposes, supervised the arrangements for festivals and pilgrimages and administered the affairs of temples and mosques, these functions became the responsibility of the European government'⁴⁶. This policy made the company servants involve in the temple administration. By 1833 thousands of temples were being administered by government officials. Old and ruined temples were renovated and officials themselves gave gifts to these temples⁴⁷. The British government were not only involved in the general management of the temple but also in the maintenance of temples, appointment of servants, keep in order the temple cars and idols and adjudicate even religious disputes⁴⁸. They had become the direct patrons of Hindu temples. Public money was paid for their support and they participated in religious festivals as the tradition demanded. 'Government officials were present to inaugurate annual festivals; troops and artillery were used to make each occasion as splendid as possible. In the military salute which ushered in Ramzan, in the official breaking of coconuts at the commencement of the monsoon, and in the employment of Brahmans to invoke propitious weather, the government was careful to enact its time – honoured role to perfection' says D.E. Smith⁴⁹. The consolidation of Hindu institutions began to come under the control of the local governments and the day to day administrative decision making came under pujaris, stanikars, pundits, vakils, judges, scholars whether in courts of law or in legislative chambers. 'In the process, the Government itself

constructed a huge informational, institutional, and intellectual infrastructure for an officially supported reification of religion'⁵⁰. Officials watched the ritual practices and took control of the temple revenues and repairs. Company functionaries collected tolls from pilgrims and taxes at fairs and festivals. 'From one end of the Empire to the other, heaven-born and twice born(*dvija*) officials of the Company sat like deities' says Frykenberg⁵¹.

The resentment by a few officials, criticism by Bishops and missionaries and pressure from England forced the government to withdraw their involvement in the religious institutions of India. In the process of relinquishing the supervision and maintenance of temples the British government handed over the temple administration to local prominent individuals or committees. These individuals and members of the committee belonging to higher castes controlled the temple. Earlier the temples were managed by the kings. The religious neutrality of the British government reinforced the waning idol worship as well as handed over the temple to the priestly castes⁵².

IMPACT OF COLONIAL INTERVENTION

William Jones, N. Halhed and Henry Colebrook's discovery of the antiquity of India's past and recovering its rich history and the subsequent oriental scholars' study of India had one commonality. Their textual studies had two important conclusions: one, centrality of castes i.e., people were fixed into positions defined by varna categories and two, the superior position of Brahmins. With this unanimity the colonial administrators went on to classify castes based on occupation and hierarchy. Ethnographers like J.C. Nesfield and William Crooke, argued that castes were defined by the occupations pursued by their members. Other like Risley insisted on physical basis of caste⁵³. "Most controversial" says Thomas Metcalf "was the effort to arrange castes hierarchically by 'social precedence'. In the various provincial 'castes and Tribes' volumes, the authors sidestepped this nettlesome question by arranging the entries alphabetically. The 1891 census made some effort within larger occupational categories to list groups in accordance with their 'social estimation', but the self-confident Risley, as census commissioner a decade later, determined to secure an accurate list ranked with 'native public opinion', he even consulted a wide array of Indians. The prescriptions found in Sanskrit legal textbooks, together with the

opinions of Brahmin pundits, shaped the response of most of these informants’’⁵⁴. The valorization of caste differences as fixed and unchanging stood on the foundation of race. Risley concluded that ‘race sentiment’ resting upon a ‘foundation of fact which scientific methods confirm’, at once ‘shaped the intricate grouping of the caste system, and has preserved the Aryan type in comparative purity throughout Northern India’⁵⁵. Through the prism of Brahmins systematization of laws, strengthening of administration, and classification of caste based on varna hierarchy flowed the concept of religion and religious communities. The codification of Hindu and Muslim law with the help of Hindu pandit and Muslim munshi shaped the idea of religious communities. The discoveries by Oriental scholars and German Indologist especially Max Muller shaped the understanding of Hinduism as religion. The company’s policy of ruling, unearthing the laws and institutions of India, focused on the Brahman community. ‘As the highest caste, as priests, and, in Jone’s time, as collaborators in the study of the ancient Sanskrit texts, Brahmins were naturally perceived as focal point of the faith, and of the Hindu community’⁵⁶ ‘in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with the Brahmins as collaborators, and the ancient texts to guide them, the coherent notion of Hinduism, and of Hindu community, that took shape in the codes of Hindu personal law’⁵⁷.

The emergence of a centralized state unified the under the British imperial authority, the Orientalist construction of Indian laws and religion was a collaborative project with the Brahmins and the upper castes. The collaboration of Orientalists and Brahmins in constructing India’s past led them to find similarities in language and race. Comparative philology led Jones to conclude that there were many similarities between Sanskrit, Latin and Greek. Drawing inference from the close relationship between Sanskrit and other European languages ‘Aryan theory of race’ came into vogue. This theory asserted ethnic kinship between European and ancient Aryan people. The upper castes in India asserted the antiquity of Indian culture and civilization on the one hand and on the other they identified themselves with the British rulers. Keshab Chandra Sen declared in 1877, ‘...in the advent of the English nation in India we see a reunion of parted cousins, the descendants of two different families of the ancient Aryan race....’⁵⁸

The British policy of not disturbing the social order and rule according to the laws of the dominant groups not only valorized the brahmanical culture but also empowered the socially dominant groups. The most important legacy of the Company Raj was the codification of Hinduism and 'Hinduism' as an ancient religion gradually spread as an 'inclusivistic and singular religion, epitomizing all that is eclectic, syncretistic, and tolerant in human behavior, doctrine and ritual' with the 'belief that Hinduism, as the religion of India' representing the majority of Indians. As a result "the Indian Empire had already become a *de facto* Hindu Raj long before the rule of the East India Company ended" remarks Frykenberg⁵⁹.

The French traveler has noted the rise of Brahmins in all spheres. He writes: "The Brahmans have also been clever enough to work their way into favour with the great European power that now governs India. They occupy the highest and the most lucrative posts in the different administrative boards and government offices as well as in the judicial courts of the various districts. In fact, there is no branch of public administration in which they have not made themselves indispensable"⁶⁰ This had a disastrous consequence for the society and polity in India.

Cohn's concludes that "the production of texts and others that followed them began the establishment of discursive formation, defined an epistemological space, created a discourse (Orientalism), and had the effect of converting Indian forms of knowledge into European objects.....Seen as a corpus, these texts signal the invasion of an epistemological space occupied by a great number of diverse Indian scholars, intellectuals, teachers, scribes, priests, lawyers, officials merchants and bankers, whose knowledge as well as they themselves were to be converted in instruments of colonial rule. They were now to become part of the army of babus, clerks, interpreters, sub-inspectors, munshis, pundits, qazis, vakils, schoolmasters, amins, sharistadars, tahsildars, deshmukhs, darogahs, and mamlatdars who, under the supervision of the white sahibs, ran the everyday affairs of the Raj"⁶¹. In seeking the authentic texts, laws, institutions for translation, explanation and its implementation in the ground, the British relied on the pundits. By preferring ancient texts to actual custom and tradition, the British not only strengthened the power of religion within civil

society but created opportunities for Indian experts to participate, albeit in a supporting role, in the fashioning of the institutions and policies of governance. One of the most profound and long-lasting effects of the British will to document and confirm traditional authority was the transformation created rights and identified responsibilities. In this process, Brahmins played a crucial role for they translated and interpreted many of the texts upon which the British were so dependent. Not surprisingly, the Brahmins were able to capitalize on this dependency and they furnished the British with interpretations that bolstered their authority and status⁶².

Swami Dharmatheertha in his book 'No Freedom with Caste: The Menace of Hindu Imperialism' has comprehensively enumerated the gradual stages of strengthening Brahmanism under colonialism. He writes:

Firstly, they raised the Brahmans to the highest posts of power, profit and confidence.

Secondly, they chivalrously championed the cause of the decaying temples, idolatrous festivals, and charming dancing girls with the hearty patronage and protection of the Company and the priests

Thirdly, they established the caste kutcheries, the most dreaded tribunal of the Hindus.

Fourthly, they unearthed from their oblivion Manu Shastras and other spurious texts, which the vast majority of the Hindus had never heard of, and elevated them to the status of authoritative works of Hindu Law.

Fifthly, they handed over the temples to the control of trustees, and thus facilitated the aggrandizement of Brahmanism and deprivation of the rights of the lower orders.

Sixthly, through judicial decisions and administrative classification and even by legal enactments, the so called Hindu Law has been applied to all Indians who are not Christians and Muhammadans.

Seventhly, they gave caste distinctions royal recognition, state protection, enhanced dignity, positive value and significance, and even political importance.

Eighthly, they blasted the hopes of reformers and teachers by making it impossible for them to alter the *status quo* actively strengthened and perpetuated the evil of society which it was their duty to fight.

Lastly, Christian antiquarians have added insult to injury by flattering the non-British castes and unchristian idolatry as meritorious cultural achievements to be preserved for the delectation of humanity⁶³.

If secularism is about the relationship between the sacred and the secular then Indian secularism is generally contextualized in the relationship between the Brahman and the Kshatriya. In the Hindu social hierarchy the Brahmin stood at the apex and below him the Kshatriya. The division of power between the sacred and the secular was the division of Brahman-Kshatriya domain. The secular power of ruling was the responsibility of a Kshatriya. The sacred power of interpreting dharma that constituted the totality of religious, social, ethical and political principles was the monopoly of the Brahmins. Below these two castes there are two more castes-the Vysyas and the Sudras. The former's occupation was trading and the latter were the toiling masses. The sacred power vested with the Brahmins had two important implications. Firstly Brahmin as a caste invested with monopoly of spiritual power had the right to legitimize the secular power of the Kshatriya who ruled the state. Secondly unlike the Popes and the Bishops the Brahmins did not have any ecclesiastical organization. They derived the power by being at the apex of the social order. They enjoyed the twin powers of legitimizing the ruler as well as the social order. The role of the Brahmin in the history of India was not just that of a priest. They performed multiple roles of ritualists, king's advisors, ministers, pundits or scholars. Irrespective of who became the ruler the Brahmin performed the duties of aiding and advising the King without usurping the temporal power. The king was expected to use his power to protect the social order. But in real polity the various political regimes that ruled India did not overtly want to uphold the social order. The rulers usually did not disturb the social order. Whenever competing religious ideologies in the form of heterodox religions, cults, movements emerged that opposed the social order and Vedic ritualism the rulers played a balancing role. If there was any threat to the brahmanical supremacy either the ruler aligned with the Brahmins, co-opted them without disturbing the social fabric based on

Varnashrama dharma. Scholars have noted this reciprocal relationship between the Brahmans and the rulers. Existence of Buddhism and Jainism had an 'erosive effect on the erosive effect on the ascendancy of Brahminical religion'. But the rulers never showed disrespect to the Brahmans nor tried to disturb ever formally the existing social fabric based on varnashrama dharma⁶⁴. In pre modern India 'the vedic tradition remained the preserve of Brahmans' and 'vedic sacrifices played an important role in the coronation of kings, legitimizing claims through ritual'⁶⁵.

Satish Chandra remarks "Apart from control over land and political authority a higher varna status could not be acquired without the support and backing of the Brahmans. The emergence of the Rajputs in northern India represented a tacit alliance between those who controlled land and possessed political authority and the brahmanas who were so to speak the legitimizers"⁶⁶. Similarly Tara Chand says: "the ascendancy of the Brahmanas in the social life of India began in the Gupta period, and was completed when foreign immigrants were received into the Hindu social system.....the Rajputs paid the price of their elevation from barabarian to civilization by accepting and confirming their (brahman) claims of superiority"⁶⁷. The pragmatic policy of the Mughal rulers in aligning with the Brahman and the Hindu rulers can also be noted. Before the advent of the British, Mughuls were the last rulers who built structures capable of controlling the sub-continent. The Mughal empire rested on a group of officials who were intermediaries whose origins varied from being 'relatives and associates of Mughals, migrated Muslims' to 'local men both Hindu and Muslim'. 'Hindu Rajput Chieftains were incorporated into official mobility group in prudent recognition of their local power base in the sensitive area west of Delhi. Marathas were recruited in the seventeenth century for the same reason'⁶⁸. The settlement of any disputes was rooted in Brahmans authority and their scriptures. As Duncan M. Derret remarks, when 'Muslims occupied the seats of power, disputes between Hindus which were brought before them were often remitted to Brahmin jurists of an opinion, upon which the parties were compelled to compose their difference. By far the greater part of litigation was never brought before Muslim officials, but was settled by the recourse to traditional methods of resolving dispute, which differed according to the caste, the status in society. and

the locality of the parties..... But it is certain that amongst Hindus the dharmasastras held very high prestige, served as the only indigenous system of jurisprudence, and supplied actual rules of law in a wide variety of contexts especially (in Northern and Eastern India) in matters of inheritance”⁶⁹.

Unearthing religious laws to rule and institutionalizing them in the process of administration were the twin processes of state building and legitimating the rule. The superior position of the Brahmans in social hierarchy and their indispensability for any ruler in the history of fragmented polities can be noted. The socio-political changes that India underwent in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, was just the opposite of western nation state formation. In the last chapter we have noted that the formation of secular state embedded in the nation state formation was the separation of sacred and the secular, state based not on Latin but vernacular languages, break-up of western Christendom and the emergence of national churches. Contrasting with the western political development India was united from fragmented polities under rule of the Company.

The basic difference between the pre-colonial rule and the colonial rule is the introduction of modern bureaucracy integrating the whole of the sub continent. Liquidating the kings and princes India was politically integrated and ruled with the codification of laws, judiciary, police, army and modern transportation of railways and communication. The process and form of ruling itself was transformed. It was rule by pen and not sword. Rule by pen needed men with the knowledge of reading and writing. Invariably the Brahmins and other twice born castes were drawn into the modern administration. It was a collaboration of the Brahmins and other upper castes with the colonial rulers. The codification of laws was with the collaboration with the Brahmins. The Brahmin pandits were always there to interpret the dharmasastras for the English judges. Recruitment for the police and the army was within the dominant castes of the regions. The civil administration was again filled with the Brahmins and other upper castes. The changes brought in revenue administration empowered the dominant castes and pauperizing the peasants. The fragmented polity was unified under the colonial rule empowering the socially fragmented dominant castes.

The professionalization of British bureaucracy was also the process of the traditionalisation of administration. Because revenue collection became the company's most essential administrative function, the British came to an understanding with Bengali zamindars. The Permanent Settlement system, also known as the zamindari system, fixed taxes in perpetuity in return for ownership of large estates; but the state was excluded from agricultural expansion, which came under the purview of the zamindars. In Madras and Bombay, however, the *ryotwari* (peasant) settlement system was set in motion, in which peasant cultivators had to pay annual taxes directly to the government. Neither the zamindari nor the *ryotwari* systems proved effective and in effect pauperized the peasantry. The company's education policies tended to reinforce existing lines of socioeconomic division in society rather than bringing general liberation from ignorance and superstition. The railroads did not break down the social or cultural distances between various groups but tended to create new categories in travel. Separate compartments in the trains were reserved exclusively for the ruling class, separating the educated and wealthy from ordinary people.

The establishment of colonial state or the British Raj is not just a history of annexation of Indian territories. In the emergence of pan-Indian state, the colonial state assumed the effective expansion of territorial annexation and their ability to co-opt the support of the local dominant castes. Since profit was the primary motive of the British the expansion of centralized territorial power required mechanism that enabled them to penetrate society to raise taxes and conduct warfare. Twin process of recognizing the time-honored local religious customs and absorbing the privileged castes into the bureaucracy and military was followed. The introduction of modern bureaucracy, rule by indigenous laws, religious texts without disturbing social institutions has played a very important role in crystallization of pan Indian state on the one hand and caste, religious and linguistic identities on the other. The process of state building in India is a process of colonial codification of native laws and its implementation throughout its territories ignoring the wide diversities that existed in the pre colonial states.

The British efforts to administer by giving precedence to the religions laws of Hindus and Muslims resulted in discarding the heterogeneous laws and regulations, customs and traditions that were prevalent among the diverse culture.

The East India Company functioned like a modern state and the Indian state has to be located in this political transformation as it gradually reshaped the nature of political authority in India. The fragmented political structures were replaced by a centralized power supported by modern bureaucracy, army and police. The company took control of administration and judicial functions and claimed sovereign power over the population. Unlike the European states where the secular state power was established with the rupture from religious organization, the Indian state under colonialism emerged with the collaboration and sanction of religious elites. The colonial administration did not divorce itself from religion. Its professed neutrality meant a policy of aggrandizing Brahmins, brahmanical social structure and brahmanical religion. The unprecedented valorization of brahmanical oriented caste and religion brought together the fragmented socially dominant groups.

The oriental construction of Hinduism and the expansion of modern colonial state had much in common. If the orientalist unearthing of religious texts, laws and social structures helped in understanding the Indian society the expanding state structures fulfilled the function of governance based on the oriental understandings. The religious and the state regimes worked in cohesion. Secondly the expansion of state was characterized by the expansion of caste based religion. Religious influence over the sectors of society was extended with the territorial expansion resulting in the monopolization of power and resources among the privileged castes. Viewed from the long term perspective the newly empowered castes gained effective control of resources and gained control over the vital power of the state. These gains have far reaching consequences. The caste based understanding of religion expanded throughout the annexed territory. The expansion and consolidation of the nexus between the dominant castes and the colonial rulers ultimately contributed the conditions that enhanced their political power and social dominance. The religious orders opened up extensive network of organizations and individuals which encompassed diverse practitioners of religion, rituals and sects by subordinating them under the Varna ideology. It was the unification of the sacred and the secular, the sacred and the profane, the social and the political.

The unification of the sacred and the secular implied that

- The social base of the colonial state largely remained with the socially dominant groups.
- The secular determined the nature of the sacred and the sacred resolved the nature of the state. In other words the contents of the sacred and the extent to which the secular can interfere in sacred was mutually determined.
- The fragmented socially dominant castes now are unified under the colonial state apparatus.
- The modern state dominated by the socially dominant groups is the transformation of the social power into political power.

Thus the introduction of modern bureaucracy, laws, and judicial institutions did not result in the emergence of a secular state. Neither did it result in the empowerment of the vast majority of lower castes or other religious minorities. This fundamental transformation is the principle context of viewing secularism in India.

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CHAPTER - IV

RELIGIOUS REVIVALISM AND CRYSTALLIZATION OF HINDUISM

The reorganization of Hinduism as a pan Indian religion, pan Indian Hindu religious community as a majority political community will be considered here as a fact of more than ordinary significance. The domination of the sub continent by the British with the modern bureaucracy, army, police, transport and communication and the Orientalist understanding of the orient's religion, society and culture had a lasting impact on India. The encounter between India and Britain and its impact lasted longer than any previous foreign invasions. The invasion by Greeks, Afghans, Portuguese, French did not have the same fundamental significance as the British conquest had. The pre colonial rule of Delhi Sultanates and Mughul rule and the dominance of Islam did not have much impact on religion or the social order. Their exercise of power over many parts of India was primarily political and military. The system that British left India has ensured a pan-Indian state structures encompassing diverse language, religion and ethnicity. The inheritance of modern political structures has equipped the post independent constitutional state to rule with modern laws on a traditional society. In the west modern political transformation was preceded by social transformations. On the one hand the national states broke their ties with European Christendom and secondly rooted the political structures on the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity.

The protestant reformation led by Martin Luther against the Pope and the church was a revolt against its greed, lust and will to dominate. The outcome of the struggle was the emergence of nation state based not on religion but on linguistic ethnicity and egalitarianism. The church and the pope had no role in the structures of the state and government. The state became the supreme institution subordinating religion and religious institutions. Democratization of society, religion

and state crystallized the modern nation state. Since Hindu religion did not have a religious head or a religious institution like the church the point of reference to understand secularism and secularization is the reform of the caste system. The hierarchical caste system is not only a social institution but also a religious institution. Brahmins at the top and below them two other castes - the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas were the twice born castes. Below these three castes were the mass of Shudras and the outcastes called untouchables. What constituted Hinduism for the revivalist? How did they define Hindu religion? In the process of defining and articulating the content of hindu religion what was their idea of caste system? These are some questions that would be raised and answered in our attempt to understand secularization in India.

It is said that Hinduism is renowned for synthesis. It has absorbed and assimilated all cultures and religions. Modern India is not ruled by the laws of Manu and the social ideals are not the ideals cherished under ancient social order. We have adopted a liberal constitution and assimilated western political institutions. The ancient beliefs and religion have been transformed substantially during the colonial period. The Hindu social reform and abolition of untouchability undertaken under colonialism have transformed Hindu religion and society with far reaching significance. Modern democratic state, bureaucracy, political institutions, secular characters are external inspired synthesis, Aryan and Dravidian basis of Hindu civilization is the internal synthesis. The unity of India is to be located in the synthesis of colonial transformation and synthesis.

BRAHMANICAL UNIFICATION

The structural and institutional changes brought about by the British by unifying India through an administrative machinery networks and by establishing representative institutions, judiciary and communication brought together socially fragmented groups. These groups constituted mainly upper caste Hindus and sparsely by Muslims and other minorities. Anil Seal, a Cambridge historian, has pointed out that the English educated professionals drawn from the three provinces of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay, for various reasons at different times constituted the level of all India. Though there were local rivalries and glaring national differences between south, north and west, "there was still a level at which the elites of Bengal, Bombay and Madras could work together and this was the level of all-India"¹.

Characterizing Indian society with reference to Hindus and Muslims as constituting two homogenous communities is to hide the heterogeneity that exists, within. The traditional society was replete with distinct castes like Brahman, Rajput, Namboodiri, Nayars, Vaisnavas, Lingayats, Chamars, Chandal or Bhangi. Even the Muslim were identified as members of particular social class, involvement in which defined to a large extent the parameters of a social life². The broad categories of Hindus and Muslims were imposed by the British.

In India men were born into different castes graded by Dharma to be strictly followed by the member of each caste. The Dharmasastras offered a system of law and organization for the establishment of the Hindu State and social structure³. The social stratification based in a hierarchy of castes with birth determining the social status, justified by Hindu religion and upheld by priestly castes, was not disturbed even after two long rule of non – Hindus, the Muslims and the British. Though there were overt differences of region and language, yet there was an underlying principle of unity. The underlying fundamental unity is ideological, the Brahmanical tradition. Caste, the place of Brahmanas, the cow, the sacred texts were all elements of Hinduism, the Brahmanical ideology was a powerful force in maintaining the integrity of Hindu society. The ideology that gave cosmic harmony as well as unity and continuity can be traced to literary traditions common to all Brahmans and accepted by all twice born castes. Reciting gayatri mantra, upanayana ceremony or sacred thread ceremony, sacredness of cow, Vedas and Upanishads were common to all the Brahmins from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. As M.N. Srinivas says, a Brahmin in Uttar Pradesh does not share in the same regional culture as a local chamar, but he (also) shares some cultural forms with Brahmins everywhere in India from Kashmir to Camorin⁴.

Many scholars have discussed Brahminical ideology constituting the fundamental unity of India and organization of Hindu society⁵. S.C. Mookerjee says, ‘from Kashmir to Camorin, from Jallalabad to Chittagong and beyond, the civilization is till Brahmanic even in the decay a matter which should be of no ordinary pride in us’⁶. K.M.Panniker in his book ‘The State and the Citizen’, referred to the Sanskrit language as constituting the cultural unity of India. He wrote: ‘the basis of our cultural unity is Sanskrit. It is this literature that is

embodied in the great language that provides us all over India with the background of our culture. It is to the classics of that language that our traditions are to trace without the continuous cultivation of Sanskrit by the intelligentsia of the country, the cultural unity of India will suffer”⁷. Most of the nationalists who refuted the British denial of existence of a uniform entity called India and emphasized on regional identities derived their strength from the Brahmanical tradition. It is with reference to the ideology of Brahminism that national figures from Bankimchandra, Vivekananda, Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo to Bipin Chandra Pal spoke of the unity of India as a continued importance. ‘The meeting of the Indian National congress in 1885 is a great symbol of this’ says Embree⁸. The Brahmanical culture as the religious culture is accepted by other twice-born caste. Spread all over India they got homogenized through English education and unified through bureaucracy, transport and communication. Congress was the quintessence of this colonial impact.

It should also be noted that Varna ideology constituting the underlying principle of unity and organization of society, was based on exploitation. As Dharm Theerta says, ‘Brahmanism is a system of socio-religious domination and exploitation of the Hindus based on caste, priest craft and false philosophy – caste representing a scheme of domination, priest craft the means of exploitation and false philosophy on justification of both castes and priest-craft’⁹. Ashok Rudra has argued that exploitation of one class by another unlike in the west which was maintained by violence, was maintained by ideology in India. ‘The Sudra was indoctrinated to accept without protest, the ‘Sudra Dharma’ and Chandala lived his life according to the cannon applicable to his station. Dharma put the highest premium on the acceptance of one’s station in life and the existing social order and precluded any idea of rebellion’¹⁰.

It is also to be taken note of that ‘Brahminical ideology cannot be confined to one group, but rather a set of values, indeed, concepts, practices and myths that are identifiable in the literary tradition and social institution’¹¹. For example Gandhi was a bania, not a Brahmin but his ideas confirm to the basic thrust of Brahmanical tradition. To Gandhi “a Hindu is anyone who, born in a Hindu family in India, accepts the Vedas, the Upanishads and Puranas as Holy books,

who has faith in the five Yamas of truth, non-violence etc and practices them to the best of his ability; who believes in the existence of the atman (self) and the parmatman (Supreme self) and believes, further, that the atman is never born and never dies but, through incarnation in the body, passes from existence to existence and is capable of attaining moksha; who believes that moksha is the supreme end of human striving and believes in Varnashram and cow protection'¹². Today Brahminism has percolated downwards and thousands of castes have emerged each deriving a satisfaction that below them there are some castes.

CONCEPT OF THE TERM 'HINDU'

There is no unanimity among scholars on the usage of the term 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism'. It has been used in history referring to different things at different points of time. The Persian word Hindu is derived from the word Sindu, the Sanskrit name of the river Indus. It referred to the people of India, the land around and beyond the Indus. 'When "Hindu" (or "Hindoo") entered the English language in the seventeenth century, it was similarly used to denote any native of Hindustan (India), but gradually came to mean someone who retained the indigenous religion and had not converted to Islam'. There is some consensus among scholars that "Hinduism" as a term was a product of western orientalist's construction who modeled Hindu religion in the same way as Christianity. From the orientalist's construction 'Hinduism came to be seen as a system of doctrines, beliefs and practices properly equivalent to those that make up Christianity, and "Hindu" now clearly specified an Indian's religious affiliation'¹³.

An overview of the term Hindu and Hinduism will help us to understand the fluidity of the concept. Scholars have defined it to denote culture and religion as well as to describe the geography of people of India. Some have questioned the utility of the term itself¹⁴.

"The word 'Hindu' occurs nowhere in the classical scriptures of Hinduism. The ancestors of the present day Hindus did not identify themselves as Hindus."

"When Western scholars and Christian missionaries arrived on the scene, the Hindus found their faith tradition 'ism'-ized and its name became 'Hinduism'."

"That even an atheist may be called a Hindu is an example of the fact that Hinduism is far beyond a simple religious system, but actually an extremely diverse and complicated river of evolving philosophies and ancient traditions."

"The word Hindu is not a religious word. It is secular in origin. It is derived from the word Sindhu, which is the name of a major river that flows in the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent. The ancient Greeks and Armenians used to refer the people living beyond the river Sindhu as Hindus and gradually the name stuck. When the Muslims came to the sub continent they called the people living in the region as Hindustanis to distinguish them from the foreign Muslims. Subsequently when the British established their rule, they started calling the local religions collectively under the name of Hinduism."

"Only 180 years ago Raja Ram Mohan Roy coined the word 'Hindu' to describe the huge variety of faiths and sects with similar but not identical philosophies, myths and rituals."

"'Hinduism' refers not to an entity; it is a name that the West has given to a prodigiously variegated series of facts. It is a notion in men's minds--and a notion that cannot but be inadequate. To use this term at all is inescapably a gross oversimplification."

"[There was] no such thing as Hinduism before the British invented the hold all category in the early nineteenth century, and made India seem the home of a 'world religion' as organised and theologically coherent as Christianity and Islam. The concepts of a 'world religion' and 'religion' as we know them now, emerged during the late 18th and early 19th century, as objects of academic study, at a time of widespread secularization in western Europe. The idea, as inspired by the Enlightenment, was to study religion as a set of beliefs, and to open it up to rational enquiry."

"Hinduism--the word and perhaps the reality too--was born in the 19th century, a notoriously illegitimate child. The father was middle-class and British, and the mother, of course, was India. The circumstances of the conception are not altogether clear. One heard of the 'goodly habits and observances of Hindooism' in a Bengali-English grammar written in 1829, and the Reverend William Tennant had spoken of 'the Hindoo system' in a book on Indian manners and history written at the beginning of the century. Yet it was not until the inexpensive handbook 'Hinduism' was published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1877 that the term came into general English usage."

"According to the New Encyclopedia Britannica 20:581, 'Hinduism' was a name given in English language in the Nineteenth Century by the English people to the multiplicity of the beliefs and faiths of the people of the Indus land. The British writers in 1830 gave the word 'Hinduism' to be used as the common name for all the beliefs of the people of India excluding the Muslims and converted Christians."

"The English term Hinduism was coined by British writers in the first decades of the 19th century and became familiar as a designator of religious ideas and practices distinctive to India with the publication of books such as *Hinduism* (1877) by Sir Monier Monier-Williams, the notable Oxford scholar and author of an influential Sanskrit dictionary. Initially it was an outsiders' term, building on centuries-old usages of the word Hindu. Early travelers to the Indus valley, beginning with the Greeks and Persians, spoke of its inhabitants as "Hindu" (Greek: 'indoi), and, in the 16th century, residents of India themselves began very slowly to employ the term to distinguish themselves from the Turks. Gradually the distinction became primarily religious rather than ethnic, geographic, or cultural."

"According to our ex-President [India] and scholar Dr S Radhakrishnan, the term 'Hindu' had originally a territorial and not creedal significance. It implies residence in a well-defined geographical area."

"The word Hinduism is an English word of more recent origin. Hinduism entered the English language in the early 19th century to describe the beliefs and practices of those residents of India who had not converted to Islam or Christianity and did not practice Judaism or Zoroastrianism."

"Just who invented 'Hinduism' first is a matter of scholarly debate. Almost everyone agrees that it was not the Hindus.... As a discrete Indic religion among others, however, 'Hinduism' was probably first imagined by the British in the early part of the nineteenth century to describe (and create and control) an enormously complex configuration of people and their traditions found in the South Asian subcontinent. 'Hinduism' made it possible for the British, and for us all (including Hindus), to speak of a religion when before there was none, or, at best, many."

"It was the Europeans who coined the word 'Hinduism' to denote all the Indian religions except Muslims, Jains, and Buddhists, and the word Hindu was erroneously used for those following the religions and worship under Hinduism."

"Hindus themselves prefer to use the Sanskrit term sanatana dharma for their religious tradition. Sanatana dharma is often translated into English as 'eternal tradition' or 'eternal religion' but the translation of dharma as 'tradition' or 'religion' gives an extremely limited, even mistaken, sense of the word. Dharma has many meanings in Sanskrit, the sacred language of Hindu scripture, including 'moral order,' 'duty,' and 'right action.'"

"It is most striking that people we now call Hindus never used this term to describe themselves. The Vedas, the Ramayana and the Bhagavad Gita, which today are seen by many as the religious texts of the Hindus, do not employ the word Hindu. That term was first used by the Achaemenid Persians to describe all those people who lived on or beyond the banks of the river Sindhu, or Indus. Therefore, at one stage the word Hindu as an ethno-geographic category came to englobe all those who lived in India, without ethnic distinction. It was only under the Muslim rulers of India that the term began to gain a religious connotation. But it was not until colonial times that the term 'Hinduism' was coined and acquired wide currency as referring collectively to a wide variety of religious communities, some of them with distinct traditions and opposed practices. Communities like the Saivites, Vaishnavites, and Lingayats, each with their own history and specific view of the world, were tied together under the blanket category Hinduism."

"The non-Muslim people of the South Asian subcontinent called Hindu had no precise word for their religions. They were, as they are, divided into thousands of communities and tribes, each having its own religious beliefs, rituals, modes of worship, etc. Finding it difficult to get the names of the religions of these communities, the British writers gave them the word 'Hinduism' to be used as a common name for all of their religions in about 1830. Thus the people called Hindus got a common element, at least in word, to be identified as a distinct, single community."

"All scholars agree that the category 'Hinduism' is something created by Orientalists. This obviously does not exclude the existence of an Indian spiritual

experience. But at a certain point it was decided to use this label, which during Colonialism became a flag for independence, and after that an attempt was made by the people of India to recognize themselves in a common religion."

"Surprisingly, though Hinduism is a very ancient religion, the word 'Hinduism', which today defines it and distinguishes it from the rest of the religions, is of much later origin. In ancient India you had either a yogi, a bhakta, a tantric, a sanyasi, a sankhya vadin, a vedantin, a lokayata, a rishi, a muni, a pandit, a pragna, a yogini, a devi, a swami, a Saivite, a Vaishnavite, a siddha or Buddha, but no Hindu."

"Unless by 'Hindu' one means nothing more, nor less, than 'Indian' (something native to, pertaining to, or found within the continent of India), there has never been any such a thing as a single 'Hinduism' or any single 'Hindu community' for all of India. Nor, for that matter, can one find any such thing as a single 'Hinduism' or 'Hindu community' even for any one socio-cultural region of the continent. Furthermore, there has never been any one religion-nor even one system of religions--to which the term 'Hindu' can accurately be applied. No so-called religion, moreover, can lay exclusive claim to or be defined by the term 'Hinduism'."

"The Supreme Court [of India] in the course of deciding an appeal in an election petition, has interpreted the meaning of 'Hindutva' and 'Hinduism' as a 'synonym of 'Indianisation' -- i.e. development of uniform culture by obliterating the differences between all cultures co-existing in the country.' The unanimous judgement given by the three-judge bench consisting of Justices J.S. Verma, N.P. Singh and K. Venkataswami, on December 11, 1995, has quoted earlier Supreme Court judgements and opinions of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Dr. Toynbee and others in coming to the conclusion that Hinduism represented a way of life."

"The Supreme Court [of India] bench dealt with the meaning of the word 'Hindutva' or 'Hinduism' when used in election propaganda. The court came to the conclusion that the words 'Hinduism' or 'Hindutva' are not necessarily to be understood and construed narrowly, confined only to the strict Hindu religious practices unrelated to the culture and ethos of the People of India depicting the way of life of the Indian people. Unless the context of a speech indicates a

contrary meaning or use, in the abstract, these terms are indicative more of a way of life of the Indian people. and are not confined merely to describe persons practicing the Hindu religion as a faith. This clearly means that, by itself, the word 'Hinduism' or 'Hindutva' indicates the culture of the people of India as a whole, irrespective of whether they are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews etc."

"The word 'Hinduism' was coined by European travelers and traders in the 16th century."

"It is interesting to note that the word Hindu is neither Sanskrit nor Dravidian and did not originate in India. It was not used by Indians in their descriptions or writings until the 17th century. If we go by the original definition of the word Hindu, anyone who lives in the subcontinent is a Hindu and whatever religion he or she practices is Hinduism. The word Hindu is a secular word and literally translated it means Indian and the word Hinduism denotes any religion or religions that are practiced by the multitude of people living in the land beyond the river Indus."

"It is hard to define Hinduism, let alone defend it. This is the reason when someone asks the question, 'Who is a Hindu or what is Hinduism?' a variety of answers are given. The most appropriate answer perhaps is a long pause and then silence. The confusion that has been propagated in the religion over many centuries has made it prohibitive even to define the word Hinduism."

"Unfortunately Hinduism is represented as monolithic. However, there is no essential Hinduism, no single belief system, and no central authority."

"The Hidden Hindus... include at least 1-2 million non-Indian Americans (Caucasians, African-Americans, Hispanics, etc.) who practice Yoga, meditation, vegetarianism, believe in reincarnation and karma, study the Vedic scriptures, etc., but who -- despite the fact that they are practising Sanatana Dharma -- will not call themselves 'Hindu', and do not understand that they are part of an ancient and living religious tradition. We need to do everything in our power to bring these two communities together, to bridge this gap."

"It is well known among scholars of South Asian religion that the word 'Hinduism' is a term of convenience--a blanket name for a wide variety of religious practices, beliefs and worldviews that sometimes have little common

ground beyond their Indian origins. Ironically, Hinduism is not an indigenous word to any of the traditions it labels."

"There are legal pronouncements [in India] that Hindus are Indian citizens belonging to a religion born in India. This means Buddhists, Sikhs or Parsis, even those who did not recognize themselves as Hindus, are to be considered Hindus."

"It should be pointed out that the word 'Hindu' is not found in any of the classical writings of India. Nor can it be traced to the classical Indian languages, such as Sanskrit or Tamil. In fact, the word 'Hinduism' has absolutely no origins within India itself. Still, it persists, and traditions as diverse as Shaivism and Jainism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism, have been described as 'Hinduism.' This may work as a matter of convenience, but ultimately it is inaccurate."

"Hinduism as one of the world religions we know today had only occurred or had been perceived since the 19th century, when the term 'Hindu-ism' started being used by leaders of Hindu reform movements or revivalists, and, often was considered to be biased by Western orientalist or the 'first Indologists'. However it is clearly accepted that sources of Hinduism and the 'streams' which feed in to it are very ancient, extending back to the Indus Valley civilization and earliest expressions of historical Vedic religion. It is not an accepted view that Hinduism is the construction of Western orientalist to make sense of the plurality of religious phenomena originating and based on the Vedic traditions, though so many have suggested it is."

"From the western point of view, the understanding of Hinduism was mediated by Western notions of what religion is and how it relates to more ancient forms of belief. It is further complicated by the frequent use of the term 'faith' as a synonym for 'religion'. Some academics and many practitioners refer to Hinduism with a native definition, as 'Sanatana Dharma', a Sanskrit phrase meaning 'the eternal law' or 'eternal way'."

"Hinduism has one of the most genetically and ethnically diverse body of adherents in the world. It is hard to classify Hinduism as a religion, as the framework, symbols, leaders and books of reference that make up a typical religion are not uniquely identified in the case of Hinduism. Most commonly it

can be seen as a 'way of life' which gives rise to many civilized forms of religions. Hinduism, its religious doctrines, traditions and observances are very typical and inextricably linked to the culture and demographics of India."

"Using the overarching term 'Hinduism' for the many religions of India is comparable to ignoring the different religious orientations within each of the Western traditions, arbitrarily merging them under a single banner—'Semitism' (which, like 'Hinduism,' merely denotes geographical location). Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and others constitute the diverse religious traditions of the Western world. Just as the term Semitism is too broad and reductionistic to represent properly the unique religious manifestation of the great Western traditions, and just as it would be inappropriate to refer to all these traditions as one religion, the term Hinduism falls short."

"The word Hindu is also not mentioned in holy books, Upanishads, Shashtras and Valmiki Ramayan, Shatpath Brahmin Granth etc. And in these holy books there is no such word as Hindus or sects or caste system, where as it is clearly mentioned in every chapter of thereof that there is only one God of the Universe."

"The name Hinduism is a misnomer and of a foreign coinage. Indeed the term Hindu is found nowhere in the Vedic scriptures, nor can it be found in any classical texts of Sanatana Dharma."

"According to Jawaharlal Nehru, the earliest reference to the word 'Hindu' can be traced to a Tantrik book of the eighth century C.E., where the word means a people, and not the followers of a particular religion. The use of the word 'Hindu' in connection with a particular religion is of very late occurrence."

"If you examine ancient Indian history and religion, you will find that the word 'Hindu dharma' is not used to describe what is today called 'Hinduism'."

"The word Hindu is relatively modern and is derived from the word Sindhu which means red. The Arabs called the Sindhu river the Indus river since they could not pronounce the S-sound. Thus, the people west of the Sindhu river came to be known as the Hindus and the country got its name India. The original name for the country was Bharata Varsha - the land of Bharata, the king who ruled the country in ancient times. The true name of the religion is Sanatana

Dharma. Sanatana means ancient and eternal. Dharma means moral duty. The word Sanatana Dharma connotes a Universal Way of Life for all living entities."

"As a follower of the religion of santana dharma, I find it offensive that we use the word 'Hinduism'. This term is an illegitimate term that was used to label us by foreign occupiers and aggressors."

"'Hindu' means a person believing in, following or respecting the eternal values of life, ethical and spiritual, which have sprung up in Bharatkhand [India] and includes any person calling himself a Hindu."

"The word 'hindu' is a non-Indian word, it's origin is Persian/Arabic. It's original meaning is 'dog,' 'low life' or 'slave'."

"I wish to state emphatically and categorically that the very word Hinduism is a misnomer. Properly speaking there is no such religion called Hinduism. This great country to which I happen to belong was known from time immemorial as 'Bharatha'. Even in Bagavat Gita Lord Krishna often addresses Arjuna as 'Bharatha'. The Ancient Country has gone through uncountable vicissitudes. Because, foreign intruders, invaders and travellers had to cross the Indus River before entering this fabulous country (it was so in the past), they began to call its inhabitants of this great and vast land as "Hindus". This word "Hindu" requires further elaboration. The word for water in Sanskrit is "Sindu" In the Vedas and our Legends we come across such words as "Saptha Sindavaha" which freely translated would mean 'The Land of Seven Rivers'. While other rivers have been given individual names, this river on the extreme Northwestern border was known as 'Sindu'. Eventually, Sindu became 'Hindu'. That is how the intruders, invaders and travellers began to call the original people of the land Hindus."

"The word 'Hindu' means a liar, a slave, a black, an infidel, in short, a man possessed of every evil to be found in the world; while the term Arya means a pious, learned, noble, and wise man, devoted to the true worship of the Eternal. With this explanation, I dare conclude that no man of common sense would like to be called a Hindu, when once he knows its meaning."

"It should be noted that the word 'Hindu' originally referred to any inhabitant of the Indian subcontinent, or Hind, not followers of the religion as it does now."

"If we see in the four thousand years worth of religious literature in India we cannot find a single reference to the word 'Hinduism' anywhere! 'Hinduism' is a word concocted by Europeans to refer to the myriad streams of religious faiths in the land of Hindustan."

"The word 'Hinduism' itself is a geographical term based upon the Sanskrit name for the great river that runs across the northern boundaries of India, known as the Sindhu."

"The word Hinduism is not found in the 'hindu' religion. In fact there is no such thing as the 'hindu' religion."

"The word 'Hinduism' was introduced in the 19th century to define the aggregate beliefs of the Arya, immigrants who left Central Asia in 1500 BC, and animist religions of native populations in India."

"The word 'Hindu' is not found in any Hindu religious text or any other ancient writing. People who lived on the western side of Hindu Kush (killers of Hindus) mountains gave this name to the natives of India. The word Hindu means black, slave, robber, thief and a waylayer."

"Until about 19th century, the term 'Hindu' implied a culture and ethnicity and not religion alone. When the British government started periodic census and established a legal system, need arose to define 'Hinduism' as a clearly-defined religion, along the lines of Christianity or Islam."

"The word 'Hinduism' originated only about 200-300 years ago."

"Beginning around 1000 AD, invading armies from the Middle East called the place beyond the Sindhu 'Hindustan' and the people who lived there the 'Hindus'"

"Today most Western scholars seem resigned to the inconclusiveness of the project of defining Hinduism. Some decline to use the word 'Hinduism' at all, or prefer to use it only in the plural, 'Hinduisms.'"

"At a very early date, Persian explorers entered the Indian subcontinent from the far Northwest. After they returned, they published chronicles. But due to the phonetics of their native Persian language, the 'S' of Sind became an aspirated 'H.' This is how the people of the Indus Valley came to be known

generically as 'Hindus' by the Persians. This flawed intonation inevitably stuck. And was later re-imported when the invading Moguls conquered India. Since they always referred to the locals as 'Hindus,' the term was adopted by the Indians themselves as a way of distinguishing native culture from that of the foreign Muslims."

"The word Hinduism was coined by the Muslim scholar Alberuni in the 11th century C.E."

"Various origins for the word 'Hinduism' have been suggested: It may be derived from an ancient inscription translated as: 'The country lying between the Himalayan mountain and Bindu Sarovara is known as Hindusthan by combination of the first letter 'hi' of 'Himalaya' and the last compound letter 'ndu' of the word 'Bindu.' Bindu Sarovara is called the Cape Comorin sea in modern times."

"Hinduism did not exist before 1830. It was created by the English colonialists in the 1830s. This remarkable circumstance is evidenced by the fact that none of the travelers who visited India before English rule used the word 'Hindu'.... This is amply borne out by the Encyclopedia Britannica, which states: 'The term Hinduism ... [was] introduced in about 1830 by British writers.' In other words, the founding father of 'Hinduism' is an Englishman!"

"According to the Hindu Scholars, Hinduism is a misnomer and the religion 'Hinduism' should be either referred to as 'Sanatana Dharma', which means eternal religion, or as Vedic Dharma, meaning religion of the Vedas. According to Swami Vivekananda, the followers of this religion are referred to as Vendantists."

"The word Hinduism is an incorrect nomenclature, which was coined by the British. Thereafter, it has stuck due to the ignorance of its followers. The term 'ism' refers to an ideology that is to be propagated and by any method imposed on others for e.g. Marxism, socialism, communism, imperialism and capitalism but the Hindus have no such 'ism'. Hindus follow the continuous process of evolution; for the Hindus do not have any unidirectional ideology, therefore, in Hindu Dharma there is no place for any 'ism'. Hindus are democratic in approach, for each individual is free to adopt any philosophy or way to self-realization."

"The word 'Hindu' is neither a Sanskrit word nor is mentioned in any of the ancient major texts of India. It is believed to be originated from the ancient

Persians. The Persians who shared some common culture with the people of Indian sub-continent used to call the Indus River as 'Sindhu.' Due to some linguistic problems, they could not pronounce the letter 'S' in their language and started mispronouncing it as 'H'. Thus they started pronouncing the word Sindhu as Hindu. The ancient Greeks, American and the rest of the world followed the same word and started calling the Indus river valley people as Hindus and gradually the word stuck. Even the word 'Hindustan' is not originated from the mouth of any Indian. The Muslim travelers and rulers who came to India during the medieval period called the Indian subcontinent as 'Hindustan' and its people as 'Hindus.' The British too followed the same words and later they used this name religiously to distinguish Hindus from Muslims and Christians"¹⁵.

If Hinduism itself constitutes multiple rituals and practices, attempts to understand them have resulted in multifarious explanations. In spite of questioning the relevance or irrelevance of the concept, Hinduism as a religion was articulated as an ancient and homogenous religion. Indian leaders have talked of these syntheses as well as the uniqueness of Hindu religion and culture. India entered modernity under colonialism. The orthodoxy faced external critique of their religion and internal challenge to the social institution of caste. Hindu religion does not have any particular book, historical figure or religious institutions to take off to understand Hinduism. In the course of history individuals have interpreted religious texts, explained the concept of god, divinity and philosophy. Some have established institutions to reform and propagate religion. It is only through these individuals and institutions we can decipher the content and constitution of Hindu religion. As Romila Thapar says: "The study of what is regarded as Hindu philosophy and religious texts has been so emphasized as almost to ignore those who are the practitioners of these tenets, beliefs, rituals and ideas. The latter became an interest of nineteenth century ethnography but this was not generally juxtaposed with textual data. Furthermore, the view has generally been from above, since the texts were first composed in Sanskrit and their interpreters were Brahmanas. But precisely because Hinduism is not a linear religion, it becomes necessary to look at the situation further down the social scale where the majority of its practitioners are located. The religious practices of the latter may differ from those at the upper levels to a degree considerably greater than those of a uniform, centralized, monolithic religion"¹⁶.

In the previous chapter we have seen that rule by bureaucracy was altogether a different kind of rule. It was rule by pen and not sword. Ruling required men who knew to read and write. Since literacy was the monopoly of Brahmins and twice born castes the colonial bureaucracy was monopolized by them. Unearthing of oblivious brahmanical texts, extending its content all over the sub continent and defining the religion based on those scriptures valorized the caste system and unified and empowered the scattered dominant social groups. It was the unification of the sacred and the secular. In a secularized society religion loses the power of justifying ascriptive social order and give earthly explanation. There are no mediators between individual and god and religion. One of the principles of secular modernity is the disintegration of traditional/feudal social order. The specific traditional/feudal social order in India is the 'caste system'. How did the practitioners and reformers of Hindu religion viewed Hindu religion and caste system is the main thrust of this chapter.

RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is called the father of modern Hindu reformation. The reformation of the nineteenth century against sati is considered one of the great movements in history of Hindu social reformation. It led to socio religious controversies with the most vital development of looking into Smritis for the existence or non existence of socio-religious practices. Born into a Brahmin family, Ram Mohan was influenced by western liberal thought. He entered the East India Company's service and soon rose in distinction. He studied Christianity to reject Christian claims and wanted to reinterpret Hinduism. This led him to establish Brahmo Samaj. As mentioned in the earlier chapter Hindu religion was formed by amalgamating various religions, sects and cults. The premise of all of them was - Vedanta. This doctrine contained three authoritative texts – Brahmasutra, the Upanishads, and the Gita. It is claimed that orthodoxy derived its authority from these texts and explained that the new interpretation of Hinduism directly flowed from these texts. Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj turned to these texts for religious reinterpretation. He writes, "The whole body of Hindu Theology, Law, and Literature, is contained in the Vedas, which are affirmed to be coequal with the creation... But from its being concealed within the dark curtain of the Sanskrit language, and the Brahmins permitting

themselves alone to interpret, or even to touch any book of the kind, the Vedant, although perpetually quoted, is little known to the public: and the practice of few Hindoos indeed bears the least accordance with its precepts”¹⁷.

DAYANANDA SARASWATI

The first systematic effort to refine and define Hinduism as a universal religion in modern India was done by Dayananda Saraswati. Like the Bible and the Quran he saw Vedas as the revealed word of God. The weakness of Hindus vis-à-vis Christians and Muslims was the lack of a revealed book. The amorphous and indefinable nature of Hindu religion could be remedied by providing hindus with a revealed book. In his book Satyarthha Prakash – the Light of True Meaning, he attempted to project Vedas as the basis of Hinduism and claim that Vedas possess all that is claimed by Christians and Muslims – universal brotherhood, direct and non-metaphysical approach to God. To counter the Christian missionaries criticism of caste system, superstition and rituals Swami Dayananda claimed that there was no sanction in the Vedas for caste, prohibition of remarriage, untouchability and Vedas gave no authority to the usages and superstitions that had become popular in the Hindu masses.

The efforts of Dayanda Saraswati to revive vedic Hinduism and reform certain abuses of orthodoxy made Hinduism more defensible against missionaries criticism of social abuses of Hinduism. Dayananda prevented people from taking bath in Ganga in times of festivals, condemned the shraddha ceremonies for the dead and said that service and loving care should go rather to the living¹⁸. He criticized the practice of preparing horoscopes and advocated the marriage of virgin widows, but not others who are given niyoga as a substitute form of temporary marriage¹⁹. One of the important issues among the upper castes was the ex-communication of those who went abroad. Dayananda ridiculed the practice of ex-communication and wrote that those who went abroad became fearless and bold, and attained great power and prosperity by studiously imbibing the good qualities and adopting the good customs and manners of the foreigners and rejecting their faults, evil habits and bad manners²⁰.

Unlike other reformers who discarded everything Indian, Dayananda Saraswati made Vedas the centre of his discourse. He elevated the Vedas into

an authoritative source of Hinduism and considered it superior to Quran and Bible. He concluded that “those who failed to accept his ideal visions or who failed to acknowledge the Veda alone as the original complete and true source of revealed system and national knowledge were either hypocritical or thoroughly of a low character (anarya)”²¹. Also Dayananda was the first to take up seriously the bringing back of converted Hindus. But his ‘shuddi’ of bringing back converts had nothing to do with the reform of caste system. It was taken in the context of Christian converts (about 4000 by 1881) in Punjab where the fear of Christian threat was engendered in their minds²². Rejecting the diverse religious practices among the masses and rooting hindu religion and culture in 2500 years of texts, the efforts of Arya samaj – the organization he established to bring back the lower caste converts into the Hindu fold, did not appeal to the masses beyond Punjab. Bipin Chandra Pal has acknowledged the Contribution of Dayananda Saraswati and his organisation Arya Samaj. He says that Dayananda not only made Hinduism accept the challenge of Islam and Christianity but also was able to ‘remove numerous social disabilities under which the present day Hindu laboured; and ‘also to claim a social order based upon the teachings of the Vedas which was from some points of view even superior to the advanced social idealism inspired by the dogma of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity of the French Illumination. India did not stand in need of going to Europe either for a purer, social order. This could be found in the ancient scriptures of the people themselves. This was really the beginning of the religious and social revival among the Hindus of India to which we owe so largely the birth of our national consciousness’²³.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Another important exponent of Vedic Hinduism was a western educated Bengali Swami Vivekananda. Coming under the influence of Ramakrishna, a mystic, Vivekananda toured all over India, travelled abroad popularizing Vedic Hinduism. His participation in First World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 not only gave recognition to Hinduism as Vedic religion, but also gave an international stamp to it. His mission was ‘to find the common bases of Hinduism and to awaken the national consciousness to them’. The common basis of Hinduism according to Vivekananda was to be found in the Vedanta. He wrote:

‘The essence of the knowledge of the Vedas was called by the name of the Vedanta, which comprises the Upanishads; and all the sects of India-Dualists, Qualified-Monists, Monists, or the Shaivites, Vaishnavites, Shaktâs, Sauras, Gânapatyas, each one that dares to come within the fold of Hinduism-must acknowledge the Upanishads of the Vedas. They can have their own interpretations and can interpret them in their own way, but they must obey the authority. That is why we want to use the word Vedantist instead of Hindu’. ‘All the philosophers of India who are orthodox have to acknowledge the authority of the Vedanta and all our present-day religions, however crude some of them may appear to be, however inexplicable some of their purposes may seem, one who understands them and studies them can trace them back to the ideas of the Upanishads. So deeply have these Upanishads sunk into our race that those of you who study the symbology of the crudest religion of the Hindus will be astonished to find sometimes figurative expressions of the Upanishads. Great spiritual and philosophical ideas in the Upanishads are today with us, converted into household worship in the form of symbols. Thus the various symbols now used by us, all come from Vedanta, because in the Vedanta they are used as figures’²⁴.

Again he said: ‘Thus the Vedanta, whether we know it or not, has penetrated all the sects in India and what we call Hinduism, this mighty banyan tree, with its immense and almost infinite ramifications, has been throughout interpenetrated by the influence of the Vedanta. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we think the Vedanta, we live in the Vedanta, we breathe the Vedanta and we die in the Vedanta and every Hindu does that’²⁵.

For Vivekananda Vedanta only could be the basis of universal religion. “Our claim is that the Vedanta only can be the universal religion, that it is already the existing universal religion in the world, because it teaches principles and not persons. No religion built upon a person can be taken up as a type by all the races of mankind... Now, the Vedantic religion does not require any such personal authority. Its sanction is the eternal nature of man, its ethics are based upon the eternal spiritual solidarity of man, already existing, already attained and not to be attained”²⁶. He believed that only Vedas can unify Hindus of different sects. Addressing a gathering in Lahore in 1897 Vivekananda spoke on ‘The

Common Bases of Hinduism’: ‘The one common ground that we have is our sacred tradition, our religion. That is the only common ground, and upon that we shall have to build. In Europe, political ideas form the national unity. In Asia, religious ideals form the national unity. The unity in religion, therefore, is absolutely necessary as the first condition of the future of India. There must be the recognition of one religion throughout the length and breadth of this land.our religion has certain common grounds, common to all our sects, however varying their conclusions may be, however different their claims maybe’²⁷.

“Perhaps all who are here will agree on the first point that we believe the Vedas to be the eternal teachings of the secrets of religion. We all believe that this holy literature is without beginning and without end, coeval with nature, which is without beginning and without end; and that all our religious differences, all our religious struggles must end when we stand in the presence of that holy book; we are all agreed that this is the last court of appeal in all our spiritual differences”²⁸.

BHAGAVAD GITA – THE HOLY HINDU TEXT

The vedic revivalism was further strengthened by the discovery of Bhagavad Gita as the socio-political gospel. If the Vedas stood for religious foundation, Gita was the holy text for social action providing social ideals for the transformation of Hindu society. The Bhagavad Gita or the Lord’s Song is a religious text embedded in the epic Mahabharata. Leading personalities from Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rajagopalachari, Radhakrishnan to Gandhi wrote on this text as a guiding principle of the political and social life of Modern India. ‘What provided the dynamics for this new message’ according to Pannikar ‘was the Gita’s uncompromising emphasis on action, its definition of the ideal man as one who with a mind which has attained equability and serves society without desiring selfish ends, solely for the benefit of the world’²⁹. Bal Gangadhar Tilak a Mahratta Brahmin and a profound Sanskrit scholar reinterpreted Gita and found spiritual authority for his programme of activism in politics. The activist teachings are based on three conceptions which are not found in any other religious scriptures. The ideals are Sthitiprajna or the person of equable mind, the doctrine of Nishkama karma or action without personal desire or attachment, and the principle of Loka samgraha or welfare of the world towards which all action should be directed³⁰.

Like Bible for Christianity and Quran for Islam Bhagavad Gita became the holy book of Hinduism which pervaded the entire life of the individual. The Bhagavad Gita provides religious sanction for a fundamental fact of social organization as the caste system. Thus the Deity in the Gita says: 'The fourfold division of castes was created by me according to the apportionment of qualities and duties'³¹. The functions, duties and privileges of the four caste are described in the following words: 'The duties of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and of Sudras too, O terror of your foes, are distinguished according to the qualities born of nature. Tranquility, restraint of the senses, penance, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, also knowledge, experience and belief (in the future world), this is the natural duty of Brahmans. Valour, glory, courage, dexterity, not slinking away from battle, gifts, exercises of lordly power, this is the natural duty of Kshatriyas. Agriculture, tending cattle, trade (this) is the natural duty of Vaishyas. And the natural duty of Sudras, too, consists in service. (Every) man intent on his own duty obtains perfection..... One's duty, though defective, is better than another's duty well performed. Performing the duty prescribed by nature one does not incur sin'³².

'The social theory behind the Loka samgraha doctrine of the Gita is most important, says Pannikar. 'The conception of a world order which is the duty of the individual to uphold by dedicating his activity toward that end, runs all through the teachings of the Gita.....The Hindu doctrine of society as a Caste organization (Chaturvarnya, the four orders) developed independently of religious thought. For the first time the Gita gives a social content to religion. The Gita's view of society, as indeed of the Hindu thinkers in general is a hierarchical organization based on functions and qualities. It upholds, a doctrine of harmonies. In Hindu practice this ideal of social solidarity had crystallized into that strange and all-pervading organization with which Hinduism itself came to be identified-the system of caste'³³.

In the background of Orientalists construction of Hindu religion in collaboration with local pundits the social reformers and religious revivalists from Roy to Vivekananda redefined and reformulated Hinduism placing it on the strong foundations of Veda. This Vedic Hindu revivalism is called the neo-Hinduism. The fundamental question that arises is what is wrong in locating, defining,

reviving Hinduism from the Sanskrit texts of Vedas and Smritis. Religious revivalism per se cannot be judged good or bad. The progressive or reactionary content of the religious revivalism or reformation has to be contextualized.

The protestant reformation led by Martin Luther led to the democratization of the Christian religion. He translated the Bible from Latin to German. Further it was brought into all European languages. The monopoly of the pope and the church in interpreting the bible was lost forever. Now the lay man could read and understand the gospel in his mother tongue. When the challenge to the pope and the church came within the establishment the national states revolted and openly challenged their authority. The religious legitimation of European feudalism collapsed with the challenge from Protestantism and the emergence of industrialization and nationalism. Nationalism as an ideology of social change established a new form of civil society based on the principle of egalitarianism.

HINDU SCRIPTURES ON CASTE SYSTEM

The revivalism led by Roy, Dayananda Saraswati and Vivekananda crystallized the notion of Hinduism within Vedic texts. Locating Hindu religion in particular texts might have helped in countering the missionary criticism. The question one asks is what is wrong in locating Hindu religion in Vedas and other Sanskrit texts? Per se there is nothing wrong. But the same text from which modern Hinduism was revived also upheld caste division of society. As S.K. Maitra says “The social Ethics of the Hindus is represented in a scheme of varnasramadharma, i.e., duties relative to one’s varna or social class and one’s asrama or specific stage in spiritual discipline. The duties of varna and asrama together constitute the code of relative duties, the duties of a station in life, the duties obligatory on the individual in consequence of social status, temperament, specific powers and capacities”³⁴.

If the social ethics represented the hierarchical social order, the polity represented by the king had upheld the fourfold caste system. A cursory look at our ancient texts will help us understand the ingredients of the inherent varna system of Hindu religion embodied in Hindu dharmaśāstras. ‘Social Order is concretised Dharma. The various writers, whether legal codifiers or writers of treatises on statecraft, were under the belief that they were giving expression to

Dharma; and so they wrote Dharma-Sastras, Sutras, Smritis etc to enunciate what constituted Dharma'³⁵. The justification of caste order comes from the divine ordering of the Devas. The metaphysical explanation of the universe that everything emerges from the immortal Brahman laid the foundation for establishing the authority of social order. As Pratapagiri Ramamurti explains:

“A Rig-Vedic seer sang “Of Rta, sure and firm-set are the bases”, and as human laws reflect the laws of the Gods we find attempts to justify existing human conditions by reference to their supposed originals in the society of Gods. We are told that “verily in the beginning this was Brahman, one only.” But being one it was not strong enough. So it created Kshatra. The Kshatras among the Devas are Indra, Varuna, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama, Mritya, Isana. Still not feeling strong enough the Brahman created the Vis, the classes of Devas which in their different orders are called Vasus, Rudras, Adityas, Visve Devas, Maruts. Even then, not still feeling strong Brahman created the Sudra colour as Pushan. This earth is that Pushan. And still not feeling strong the Brahman created ‘THE MOST EXCELLENT LAW (DHARMA)’³⁶.

The Varna Dharma relates to the duties of the castes. The duties of the castes according to the lawgiver Manu are:

Duties of the Brahmans: teaching and studying (the Vedas); sacrificing for their own benefit and for others giving and accepting of alms.

Duties of Kshatriyas: to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Vedas), and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures.

Duties of Vaisyas: to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Vedas), to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land.

Duties of Sudras: “One occupation only the Lord prescribed to the sudra, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes”³⁷.

According to Prasastapada the duties of the castes are:

(a) The main duties common to the three castes of Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya. These are Sacrificial ceremonies(Ijya yagadi). Acquisition of knowledge by study (Adhytaayana). Charity (Dana)

(b) The duties obligatory on the Brahmin only. These are

Acceptance of gifts (ratigraha). Teaching (Adyapana). Performance of ceremonial sacrifice (Yajana). The way or mode of life prescribed for a brahmin (Svavarnavihita Samskara).

(c) The duties obligatory on the Kshatriya only. These are

Protecting people from external aggressions and internal disturbances, as well as governing them with a view to place prosperity (Prajapalana). Chastising the wicked (Asadhunigraha). Not retreating from battle (Yuddheshu Shivartana). The way or mode of life prescribed for a Kshatra (Svakiya Samskara).

(d) The duties obligatory on the Vaisya only. These are

Buying(kraya)i.e. procuring commodities from others after paying their proper price (mulyaindattva parasmad dravyagrahanam). Selling (vikraya), i.e. bartering away commodities to others after realizing from them their legitimate price (mulyam adaya parasya svadravya danam). Agriculture (krishi). The way or mode of life prescribed for a Vaisya(Svakiyasamskara).

(e) The duties obligatory on the Sudra only. These are

Being subservient or subjection to the other three castes (purva-varna-paratantra). Observing such rites as do not require the utterance of the sacred Mantras or incantation (Amantrika Kriya)³⁸.

Vasishtha thus describes the duties of the four castes:

Of the Brahmin: studying the Veda, teaching, sacrificing for himself, sacrificing for others, giving alms, and accepting gifts.

Of the Kshatriya: studying, sacrificing for himself, and bestowing gifts. His peculiar duty is to protect the people with his weapons.

Of the Vaisya: studying, sacrificing for himself, and bestowing gifts, and the peculiar duties are agriculture, trading, tending cattle, and lending money at interest.

Of the Sudra: To serve the superior castes³⁹.

Kamandaka gives the following description of the duties of the different castes:

The holy acts of teaching, of conducting sacrifices on the other's behalf, and of accepting alms from the pious, these have been enumerated by the sages from those belonging to the superior sect (Brahmana.)

A king should live by his weapons and by protecting his subjects. The means of subsistence of a Vaisya are cattle-rearing, cultivation and trade. The duty of the Sudra is to serve the twice born sects, one after the other⁴⁰.

Kautilya enunciates:

“As the triple Vedas definitely determine the respective duties of the four cases and of the four orders of religious life, they are the most useful.

The duty of the Brahman is study, teaching, performance of sacrifice, officiating in other's sacrificial performance and the giving and receiving of gifts.

That of a Kshatriya is study, performance of sacrifice, giving gifts, military occupation and protection of life.

That of Vaisya is study, performance of sacrifice, giving gifts, agriculture, cattle breeding and trade.

That of a Sudra is the serving of twice-born (dvijati), agriculture, cattle breeding, and trade (varta), the profession of artisans and court bards (Karukusilavakarma)⁴¹.

According to Santi Parva, the following are the duties of the castes:

Duties of the Brahmans: Self-restraint; study of the Vedas; austerities, practice of charity; performance of sacrifice.

Duties of Kshatriyas: A Kshatriya should give, not beg; should himself perform sacrifice, but not officiate at the sacrifice of others. He should never teach the Vedas, but study them with a Brahman preceptor. He should protect the people. Always exerting himself for the destruction of robbers and wicked people, he should put forth his prowess in battle – Establishing all his subjects in the observance of their respective duties, a king should cause all of them to do everything according to the dictates of righteousness.

Duties of Vaisyas: A Vaisya should make gifts, study the Vedas, perform sacrifices, and acquire wealth by fair means, protect and rear all domestic

animals, and trade. A Vaisya should never desire that he should tend cattle. If a Vaisya desires to tend cattle, no one else should be employed in that task.

Duties of the Sudras: "The creator intended the Sudra to become the servant of the other three orders. For this, the service of the three other classes is the duty of the Sudra. By such service of the other three, a Sudra may obtain great happiness. He should wait upon the other classes according to the order of seniority; a Sudra should never amass wealth, lest by his wealth he makes the members of the three superior classes obedient to them. By this he would incur sin. With the king's permission, however, a Sudra, for performing religious acts, may earn wealth. It is said that the Sudras should certainly be maintained by the three orders. Worn out umbrellas, turbans, beds and shoes and fans, should be given to the Sudra servants. Torn clothes which are no longer fit for war should be given away by the regenerate classes to the Sudra. These are the latter's lawful acquisitions"⁴².

REVIVALISTS ON CASTE SYSTEM

The question is how did the Hindu revivalists respond to the question of caste? For all Vedic revivalist and upper caste reformers the question that haunted them was the question of caste – 'Varnashramadharma'. Whenever the question of caste system arose they ducked, juggled with words arguing that caste system was only a theorization of ancient social thinkers and it was symbolism, it was only rationalization of fourfold order of society, it had no relation at any time to the facts of caste and some went out and out to justify Varnashramadharma as the noblest form of social organization. When attacked, the line of defense normally advocated was that the Varnashramadharma and the present caste system have no relationship.

Like Roy, Dayananda Saraswati too continued the tradition of upper caste social reforms. Most important among all the reforms was his ideas of caste system which was echoed by many nationalists. Though Dayananda rejected the current basis of caste system, he adhered to the Vedic notion of four varnas of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudras. Though he did not propose the abolition of caste system, he found flexibility in the Vedic concept of caste. According to Dayananda, in the eyes of God man was not born into any Varna but was identified according to the life he led⁴³.

This notwithstanding Dayananda Saraswati rejected inter-dining as well as inter-marriage. He found harm in taking food from lower castes, 'for these bodies are not so pure and free from impurity, stench or other kinds of dirt....the body of the low caste is full of atoms and stench and other noxious matter'⁴⁴. Regarding marriage he wrote, 'marriage should take place in their own varna, i.e., a Brahmin man should be married to a Brahmin woman; a Kshatriya to a Kshatriya, a Vaishya to a Vaishya and a Sudra to a Sudra. This will maintain the integrity of each varna as well as good relations'⁴⁵.

Vivekananda declared that "Caste system was the most marvelous thing that Hinduism has contributed to the World civilization"⁴⁶. He said 'We believe in Indian caste as one of the greatest social institutions that Lord gave to man'⁴⁷. Caste and civilization was inseparable for Vivekananda – 'If my caste is left out of consideration, what will there be left of the present –day civilization of India?'⁴⁸. Though this institution has many defects and thwarted 'the legitimate fructification of this most glorious Indian institution' Vivekananda says 'it has already worked wonders for the land of Bharata and is destined to lead Indian humanity to its goal'⁴⁹. For the national well being 'the laws laid down by the great Rishis of old must be brought back and be made to rule supreme once more'⁵⁰. For him the laws laid down by the rishis are nowhere to be found in India. For Vivekananda caste is a natural order. The ideal caste system as existed in the vedic times has been destroyed with the emergence of multiple castes. To save our motherland the four fold caste system has to be revived. He said: "We must revive the old laws of the Rishis. We must initiate the whole people into the codes of our old Manu and Yâjnavalkya with a few modifications here and there to adjust them to the changed circumstances of the time. Do you not see that nowhere in India now are the original four castes (Châturvarnya) to be found? We have to redivide the whole Hindu population, grouping it under the four main castes of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, as of old. The numberless modern subdivisions of the Brahmins that split them up into so many castes, as it were, have to be abolished and a single Brahmin caste to be made by uniting them all. Each of the three remaining castes also will have to be brought similarly into single groups, as was the case in Vedic times"⁵¹.

Vivekananda found India's salvation in religion. For him 'politics never formed a necessity of life, but religion and spirituality have been the condition upon which it lived and thrived, and has got to live in future'⁵². The valuable contributions made by the caste system to the preservation of Hindu religion and society in the medieval past were lauded, and it was pointed out that although castes existed in every country of the world 'but nowhere in their plan and purpose so glorious as here'. Hence, leveling of caste was undesirable for the growth of Hindu society. The Hindu social order was the reflection of natural order - - inequality was the law of nature. For Vivekananda each one is good in performing a particular work. If he is good at a particular work he has to perform only that work. He says 'Caste is a natural order' because it is in 'the nature of society to form itself into groups'. 'Caste is good' because 'that is the only way of solving life. Men must form themselves into groups, and you cannot get rid of that. Wherever you go, there will be caste'⁵³.

Vivekananda compares Caste system to the European competitive class system. He finds caste good and a solution to the Europe competitive system. For him caste has very good things. The great side of caste is that it prevents competition. Caste has made the 'nation alive while other nations have died'⁵⁴. 'Europe is trying to solve...how much a man can have, how much more power a man can possess by hook or by crook, by some means or the other. Competition - cruel, cold, and heartless - is the law of Europe. Our law is caste - the breaking of competition, checking its forces, mitigating its cruelties, smoothing the passage of the human soul through this mystery of life'⁵⁵.

Vivekananda was against denouncing caste system or social reformation. For him Caste was hereditary.... Caste is a social law and is based on diversity of Guna and Karma⁵⁶. The Indian method of fusion is to 'elevate the caste first'. Individually one cannot raise the social ladder⁵⁷. He said "...denunciation is not at all the way to do good. That there are evils in our society even a child can see; and in what society are there no evils? our people are on the whole the most moral and the most godly, and our institutions are in their plan and purpose, best suited to make mankind happy. I do not, therefore, want any reformation"⁵⁸. For him the ideal of caste system is to raise the Chandâla to the level of Brahmin and not destroy caste system 'The ideal at one end is the

Brahmin and the ideal at the other end is the Chandâla, and the whole work is to raise the Chandala up to the Brahmin'⁵⁹. In his ideal a Chandala could raise and assimilate to the culture of the Brahman by learning Sanskrit, but have to retain the Sudra status until he acquires the characteristics of Vaishya and Kshatriya. Since the temperament and character of Sudras were inferior to other high castes, 'the Sudras as rule are either mainly servile, licking like dogs the feet of the higher class, or otherwise are as inhuman as brute beasts''⁶⁰.

Jati Dharma and Hindu religion were inseparable for Vivekananda. 'The right and correct means is that of the Vedas –the Jâti Dharma, that is, the Dharma enjoined according to the different castes –the Svadharma, that is, one's own Dharma, or set of duties prescribed for man according to his capacity and position – which is the very basis of Vedic religion and Vedic society.....this Jati Dharma, this Svadharma, is the path of welfare of all societies in every land, the ladder to ultimate freedom. With the decay of Jati Dharma, this Svadharma, has come the downfall of our land..... thus the vital point of our national life is touched'⁶¹. He quotes Gita–“I should then be the cause of the admixture of races, and I should thus ruin these beings” and then raises questions – How came this terrible Varna-Sâmkarya – this confounding mixture of all castes – and disappearance of all qualitative distinctions? if the Jati Dharma be rightly and truly preserved, the nation shall never fall'. What has led to the fall of the nation is that 'the basis of the Jati Dharma has been tampered with. Therefore, what you call the Jati Dharma is quite contrary to what we have in fact. First, read your own Shastras through and through, and you will easily see that what the Shastras define as caste- Dharma, has disappeared almost everywhere from the land. Now try to bring back the true Jati Dharma and then it will be a real and sure boon to the country'⁶².

Vivekananda showed great concern that large section of Indian society left their ancestral religion. He favoured the idea of receiving them back. He said, “we shall otherwise decrease in numbers”. He recommended giving the reconverted freedom to choose their own form of religious belief, but within the framework of caste system (even a creation of a new separate one) in order to facilitate their assimilation 'into the great body of Hinduism'⁶³.

Aurobindo who is considered an authoritative commentator on Gita has said: 'In point of fact the verses of the Gita have no bearing on the existing caste system because it is very different from the ancient ideal of Chaturvarna, the four clear-cut orders of the Aryan community, and in no way corresponds with the description of the Gita. Agriculture, cattle-keeping and trade of every kind are said here to be work of the Vaishya; but in the later system, the majority of those concerned in trade and in cattle-keeping and artisans, small craftsmen and others are actually classed as Sudras – where they are not put altogether out of the pale – and with some exceptions the merchant class alone, and that not everywhere, ranked as Vaishya. Agriculture, Government and service are the profession of all classes from the Brahmin down to the Sudra. And if the economic divisions of function have been confounded beyond any possibility of rectification, the law of the Guna or quality (as declared by the Gita) is still less a part of the latter system. There, all is rigid custom, *acara*, with no reference to the need of the individual nature. If again we take the religious side of the contention advanced by the advocates of the caste system, we can certainly fasten no such absurd idea on the Gita as that it is a law of man's nature that he shall follow, without parents or his immediate or distant ancestors, the son of a milkman be a milkman, the son of a doctor a doctor, the descendants of shoemakers remain shoemakers to the end of measurable time, still less that by doing so the unintelligent and mechanical repetition of the law of another's nature without regard to his own individual call and qualities, a man automatically furthers his own perfection and arrives at spiritual freedom'⁶⁴. K.M Pannikar endorses Aurobindo's argument: 'In fact there is nothing in common between the caste system and Chaturvarnya. Chaturvarnya or the fourfold order of society is a doctrine of social solidarity. Caste – the essential principle of which is division based on birth – is the very opposite, a doctrine of fragmentation'⁶⁵.

Crystallizing Hinduism around Brahminical tradition, making Vedas as an authoritative text, Bhagavad Gita as the holy book, removing irritants in higher caste ascent to secular spheres and claiming caste system as superior form of social organization over European social order the revivalist made Hindu religion more defensive against foreign religions. The new interpretation gave a new authority to upper caste Hindus to challenge the critiques of caste Hinduism and

on the other hand to deny the plural religious practices. The neo Hinduism closed all doors other than Christianity and Islam for an independent religious doctrine, practice and propagation. The British attempts to understand Hindu religion led them to the Brahmin priests and their texts. Indians in the nineteenth century continued the process and laid a strong foundation in the Brahmanical Vedas, Upanishads and the varna social order.

It is to be noted that this revivalist movement was brahmanical in origin and content. Even though they claimed to have abandoned religiously sanctioned caste system the organizations they set up like Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Aurobindo's Ashram which are socially and politically active continue in promoting Hinduism, without any element of caste reforms. Rather than attacking the Varna order and articulating the religion based on equality the revivalist not only justified the caste system but also attacked popular Hindu rituals and practices. While keeping caste as part and parcel of neo-Hinduism the revivalism was not reinterpreting the flexibility of caste system but justifying the existing caste relations.

If the protestant reformation led to the secularization of religion in Europe the Hindu revivalism and reformation standing on the strong foundations laid by the orientalist did not lead to secularization of religion or society but reinforced Vedic texts as the source of Hindu religion and varna social order as the ideal form of socio-political organization. The consequence of Hindu revivalism and glorification of caste system was very grave. It was not a division of society but division of human beings based on birth. Belief in Vedas and Varnashramadharma tends to produce explanations of genesis, function, structures and functions of the Hindu religion. This reinforced the hierarchical caste order of the brahminical beliefs and practices.

The caste structure to which Hindu religion is organized constituted the inclusiveness of all non – Islamic and non – Christian beliefs and practices. It closed the openings of any resistance and limited any aspiration of equality and egalitarianism within neo-Hinduism. Organizing Hinduism asymmetrically tends to divide the population and restructure the society by increasing the power and position of the Brahmins and the other upper castes in the emerging socio-political landscape. The majority of the lower castes who constituted the

deprived groups were dispossessed of their power to resist. When the revitalized Hindu religion operated in the national struggle it reinforced the religiously sanctioned social order as the ideal political order.

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CHAPTER V

INDIAN NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL REFORM

Nationalism is one of the important ideological movements of modern history. Writers have looked at it from different angles at different points of time. Wide range of meaning is associated with nationalism. It may 'refer to the doctrine or ideology of an aspiring class, or to the policy orientation of a state, or to a praiseworthy sentiment of attachment to one's own nation or state...It may refer to an entity forming part of the compound concept nation-state, or to a linguistic ethnic community struggling for its own statehood; again it may refer to a relationship that exists or is presumed to exist between individuals and groups with either equality or common cultural bond as the basis of common political consciousness'¹.

The usages of the term nationalism are broadly referred to language and symbolism, a socio-political movement and ideology of the nation. As a sociopolitical movement nationalism is like any other movement and organization. But it emphasizes 'cultural gestation and representation'. Language and symbolism overlapping with the ideology of nationalism immerses itself in the culture of the nation – 'the rediscovery of its history, the revival of its vernacular language through such disciplines as philology and lexicography, the cultivation of its literature, especially drama and poetry, and the restoration of its vernacular arts and crafts, as well as its music, including native dance and folksong'². Nationalism main focus is nation. Nation is a 'new entity, a socio-political community in modernity'³. Anderson defines it as 'an imagined community with deep sense of horizontal comradeship'⁴. What distinguishes this imagined community from pre-modern community? Pre modern community is hierarchically organized and legitimated by religion. The rupture that takes place is in the conception of the community itself. Aloysius says, "The 'nation' is a mere entity, a socio-political

community in modernity. It is not a mere by-product or an after-thought of nationalism either as an ideology or a movement. It is a new kind of collectivity in which 'some deep, permanent and, profound changes have taken place in which society is organised'⁵.

What is the relationship between nationalism and secularism? Like secularism nationalism too was born in Western Europe. If secularism is the breakup of state and church, nationalism was the ideology which crystallized the nation states in Europe. Prior to the emergence of nation states Europe was ruled by empires. With Constantine's acceptance of Christianity as the official religion of the empire 'Christianity was taking over the traditional role of sacralizing power, legitimating the existing order of things and inculcating in the populace reverence for the authorities and obedience to order'⁶. Nation-states in Europe no more identified with church. They did not identify with the vertical organization of the society. The church became national church. It was a new form of political community based on equality and egalitarianism. The ideology that articulated the new form of horizontal community was nationalism. The role of religion as a means of legitimating the society lost its relevance. This process is called secularization. Secularism and secularization are the two sides of the same coin. If secularism is the rupture between the European Christendom and the emerging national states, secularization is the process where the church articulated and sanctioned religion becomes insignificant in society. Nationalism becomes an ideology for secularization.

As Romila Thapar has argued that the secularization of society is 'linked to inclusive nationalism and the creation of a nation-state with an attempt to modernize society'⁷. Capitalism, industrialization and modern sciences are associated with secularization. With establishing democracy and protecting rights of citizens secularization cannot be achieved. Since state distances it from established religion, freedom of religion is upheld by the state. One of the distinguishing characters of modern nation state is that pre-modern privileges to individuals are non-existent. Individuals have multiple identities and one among them is the religious identity. The secularization of society does not 'oppose religion but prefers that religious authorities should not control the institutions linked to social ethics, economic development, and cultural change'⁸.

One of the major differences between the western secularism and Indian secularism is that western secularism was triggered by protestant reformation. The individual was liberated from the religion sanctioned feudal order. But in India instead we see religious revivalism. Standing on the foundation of oriental and brahminical collusive understanding of Hindu religion, politically conscious Indians powerfully rearticulated and crystallized the notion of Hinduism. It is a fact that Indian nationalists articulated their political ideology through religious idioms. The question is what impact the political mobilization through religion had on the lower castes and the Muslims.

The collusive colonialism had disproportionately empowered the upper castes. The unified fragmented socially dominated castes were the new class articulating the aspirations of the nation and agitating for political power. The anti-colonial nationalism is an insufficient idiom to understand the movement for independence for two reasons. Firstly 'anti- colonial nationalism is closely related to the collaborator system established under the modern colonial state. It cannot, therefore be seen in simple nationalist terms of colonial society against imperial power. The cultural identities to which it appeals are functions of the forms taken by opposition politics. As there is no unity among the various language and other cultural groups which are identified in nationalist ideology, one can hardly see such identities as the ultimate source of the nationalist movement' says Breuilly⁹. Secondly the division between nationalist and non-nationalist could be traced back to lower caste groups' critique of the nationalist discourse. They showed apprehension at the transfer of political power to the upper caste nationalist. The Madras Social Reform Advocate wrote: "If today the rule of the Englishman ceased in our land, in a few years the nightmare of our past would settle down again, and providence will have to select a new instrument, a new race of conquerors, for our redemption"¹⁰.

Conceptualizing nationalism as secularization in India means a precondition where social reforms supplemented political reforms. Anti colonial nationalism should not be seen merely as a struggle against the British to capture the state but linked to the formation of the modern nation. Nation is a new form of political community based on egalitarianism. Nationalism as secularization of

society has to confront the religiously sanctioned caste order. This is not to suggest that secularism is an antonym of religion. As Romila Thapar says, secularism is 'quintessential to a modern society. A secularizing society requires both the state and its citizens to determine social ethics as foundational to the nature and quality of the society that is being created'¹¹.

POLITICAL AWAKENING AND SOCIAL REFORM

Secularization of religion and society is an important aspect of modern society. The pre modern form of hierarchical society legitimated by religion loses its significance and importance in modern state and society. Religious revivalism in India was not only revival of Hindu religion based on age old brahminical texts but also a justification of varna based caste system. Untouchability was part and parcel of the Hindu religious system. The lower castes were denied basic civil rights like use of public roads, public wells and English education. Employment in bureaucracy was not percolating downwards. Hence social or religious reform does not mean the same thing for the lower castes. For a lower caste getting education, which is denied for centuries is not reform, but political revolt. Political awareness means one becoming conscious of his or her rights. These rights were denied based on their birth. So the emergence of political consciousness has to be seen with the emergence of lower castes. Since the pioneering social reformers were upper castes, issues taken up by them are projected as national problems. For instance sati which was an issue which concerned only upper caste Hindus, is seen as a national evil. Therefore any analysis of social reforms has to be looked in light of the question of caste. What were the issues taken up by the social reformers? How did the educated class defy the orthodoxy? And whom did it benefit? Did it lead to the secularization and democratization of religion and society are some of the questions raised and answered in this chapter.

Political awakening and the development of all India consciousness in India is closely related to the controversies generated by the upper caste social reforms. Like Roy who established Brahmo Samaj to abolish sati and reform Hinduism, few educated Indians took up issues like widow remarriage, rising the age of marriage. These efforts antagonized the Brahmin orthodoxy. To counter

the abolition of sati the orthodox had formed a conservative body called Dharma Sabha. Although its original purpose was defeated it continued to exist and discussed religious and social questions and also directed its attention to the promotion of Sanskrit in Bengal.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar pleaded for remarriage of widows and abolition of polygamy which was more prominent among Kulin Brahmins of Bengal. Though not intended widow remarriage movement became the first social reform to get a national character. Under the inspiration of Vidyasagar, Vishnusastri Pandit with other young reformers like Krishnasastri Chiplunkar, Lokahitwadi, R.B.Bhandarkar and M.G.Ranade founded Vidhavavivahothyaka Sabha (Society for Promoting Widow Remarriage) in Bombay. Unlike Vidyasagar who wanted to legalize the remarriage of widows through legislation, Vishnusastri wanted 'the validation from the religious authority'. A nine day debate went on between the opponents and the reformers under auspices of Shankaracharya where the final decision went against the reformers¹². The orthodox was quick to respond and founded Vithoba Anna Daftardar of Poona to resist the influence of widow remarriage association. In Madras Presidency Virasalingam Pantulu founded the Rajahmundry Social Reforms Association in 1878 and began his crusade against enforced widowhood. Soon thereafter in northern India the newly established Arya Samaj advocated remarriage of widows. Keshav Chandra Sen an outspoken reformer of Brahma Samaj who broke away from Debendranath Tagore and started Adi Brahma Samaj advocated the rise of the age of marriage for girls to sixteen and propagated a simplified version of the marriage ceremony.

The upper caste led social reform was not secularization of religion or society. It was neither a protest reformation redefining nor rearticulating religion. All the reform that was undertaken by educated Hindus and the controversy it generated had no reference to the problems of the lower castes. Moreover defying orthodox for many educated Hindus meant drinking excessively, eating beef and embracing Christianity which were confined to individual protest and mostly carried out secretly. The Parahamsa Mandali founded in 1849 at Bombay Elphinstone College, dedicated itself to the destruction of polytheism and caste system, required to eat food cooked by untouchables or Christians and dine regardless of caste, tribes, but held its meeting secretly¹³.

Preaching and practice was not an ingredient of social reforms in India. Though reformers opposed caste theoretically, every bit of it was practiced by them. The father of Indian renaissance Raja Ram Mohan Roy who said that 'distinction of caste introducing innumerable division and sub-divisions among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling'¹⁴ did not eat with other castes or religious communities and the Brahmin sacred thread adorned his neck till the end of his life¹⁵. Whatever reforms were undertaken, the reformers themselves never followed them. The radical Keshav Chandra Sen propagated the rise in age for marriage for girls and simple marriage, married off his daughter who was not yet thirteen to a boy who was not yet sixteen with orthodox ceremonies¹⁶. Ranade who propagated widow remarriage did not marry a widow, but married an eleven year old girl when his first wife died and did prayschita (penance) for taking tea from Christian missionaries¹⁷.

The reformers' attempt to eradicate social evils of the upper castes was an adjustment of the caste groups entering modernity. The result was the fortification of Brahmanism. It did not result in weakening of the caste system. Its emphasis on removal of evil institutions like sati, child marriage, polygamy widow re-marriage were customs and practices of upper caste. Removing these social evils meant strengthening the upper castes led brahmanical Hinduism. This is quite evident from Raja Ram Mohan Roy's own statement. He said: "the ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to Brahminism, but to a preservation of it....."¹⁸.

The ideals of reforms were defined by educated men and 'social reform did not ordinarily mean a reorganization of the social structure at large for the benefit of lower castes, instead it meant the infusion into the existing social structure new ways of life and thought, the society would be preserved, while its members would be transformed' observes Heimsath¹⁹. But the controversies it generated helped the upper castes to communicate all over India. Transport and communication, and news papers were effectively used to propagate different views. This helped to create all India consciousness. As K.N. Pannikar observes: "During the course of the nineteenth century the intellectuals were brought together, either in opposition or in unity, in a series of struggles over socio-

cultural issues. Between the debate over the abolition of Sati in Bengal in the early part of the nineteenth century and national controversy over the age on Consent Bill during the closing decades a number of public questions became their common concern. The Anti-Idolatry Memorial, the Lexi Loci Act, the Widow Marriage Act and the Civil Marriage Act are to mention a few. The communities and their eventual transition to a national community can be observed during the course of agitation over these issues”²⁰. Particularly the ‘battle over age on consent roused orthodox leaders throughout British India to a consciousness of its actual weakness and power of their position.....the cry of religion in danger had awakened a responsive choir in millions who otherwise took no note of public affairs”²¹.

The colonial induced changes had strengthened and universalized the traditional order. The controversy surrounding social reformation brought together the orthodox in resisting even minor social change. The colonial state’s intervention in giving legal sanction to the reforms led to resistance which transformed into anti-colonial consciousness. Anti colonial discourses were not just discourses for freedom struggle but a defense of past glories, assertion of superiority of Hindu values over the west. These discourses were articulated by the newly educated upper castes who dominated the colonial administration, profession of law, and journalism. The politics of these empowered classes who called themselves nationalist articulated the direction and destiny of the national movement.

NATIONALISTS AND SOCIAL REFORMS

When the educated class of the Madras, Bombay and Calcutta provinces joined to form Congress, the question of gender and caste were the two questions that had gained preponderance. Both the questions of liberating women and lower castes were inter-connected because the same set of values which had kept the lower castes subjugated also kept women degraded. Both had only duties, no rights. Gopal Hari Deshmukh popularly known as Lokhitwadi and Jotirao Phule had taken up the issue of caste and oppression of women. Both criticized the caste system and campaigned for compulsory education for girls. Lokhitwadi joined Vishnu Shastri Pandit, Mahadev Ranade and Atmaram Pandurang in starting the Prarthana Samaj in 1866. Gopal Agararkar and Gopal

Krishna Gokhale also joined the group. They advocated abolition of the institution of caste and sang hymns of Tukaram which ridiculed the caste system – ‘the Brahman who flies to rage at the touch of a Mahar; that is no Brahmin, the only absolution for such a Brahmin is to die for his own sins’²². Prarthana Samaj gave priestly duties to non-Brahmins and thus challenged the established notion of the sanctity of Brahmanical priesthood’²³.

The pre-colonial education was the privilege and monopoly of Brahmins and other upper castes. According to Shastric injunctions women and lower castes were not given any education. So the introduction of English education by the British was inherently egalitarian in the sense that it was opened to all sections of the society. The establishment of educational institutions by Protestant missionaries not only defied Shastric injunctions but also reached backward castes and untouchables. By using the arguments of European radicalism the missionaries attacked caste hierarchy, idolatry and superstitious practices of Hindu society of nineteenth century. Though it did not attract much conversion among the lower castes it created many reformers²⁴. Jotirao Phule, Lokhitwadi and Ranade campaigned for mass education and especially girls’ education. One of the obstacles to women’s education was the custom of marriage of girls as young as one. Therefore women’s education and opposition of child marriage was taken up simultaneously²⁵.

The support for mass education and the government’s efforts in maintaining educational institutions ‘alarmed the dispossessed landed elite’ says Parimala Rao²⁶. Anti- reformists led by Vishnushastri Chiplunkar and later joined by V.N. Manadalik and Bal Gangadhar Tilak declared that educating women was ‘*loss of nationality or rashriyata*’. Loss of caste was equated with loss of nationality. They declared that ‘the institution of caste had been the basis of Hindu society and undermining the caste would undermine the Hindu society’²⁷.

Tilak who represented the orthodox point of view opposed compulsory education for women and lower castes. He asserted that the duty of the girl was ‘to look after the house’. By offering girls and boys equality of educational opportunities, he argued in *Kesari*, society would merely suffer because in this world the spheres of duty of women are different, from those of men²⁸. Ranade

and other reformers founding girls' schools were attacked by Tilak stating that 'education would make woman immoral'²⁹. Tilak opposed the teaching of modern subjects like History, Geography, Mathematics and science for both lower castes as well as woman. He explained that teaching modern subjects to the children of lower castes would bring harm to them as they would learn to 'condemn the profession of his father' and the father would be 'deprived of the son's assistance at the old trade'³⁰. Opposing teaching modern subjects to girls Tilak suggested that 'high school girls should be taught Sanskrit, sanitation and needle work' as 'women well versed in English would have nothing substantial to offer the society, because English did not offer any tangible knowledge'. He declared that 'English education had de-womanising impact on women, which denied them a happy worldly life'³¹. To bolster his arguments that education corrupted women, Tilak pointed to the case of Rakambai, the educated daughter of Bombay physician who refused to go to the home of her much older husband³². Her subsequent conversion to Christianity was viewed as crimes comparable to 'theft, adultery, and murder'³³.

CONGRESS AND SOCIAL REFORM

The Indian National Congress founded in 1885 by the English educated upper caste Indians under the leadership of A.O. Hume did not take up any social issues, but confined itself to political reforms. Daddabhai Naoroji in his presidential address during the second annual conference made it clear that the National Congress must confine itself to questions in which the entire nation has a direct participation, and it must leave the adjustment of Social Reforms, and other class questions, to class congress³⁴. It was National Social Conference, created or an adjunct to National Congress, that took up social issues. Social Conference, an upper caste social reform organization, for the first time questioned the organization of Hindu society on caste lines. The Social Conference in 1895 passed a resolution favoring the uplift of *pariahs* and succeeding conferences reaffirmed the motion³⁵. R. G. Bhandarkar in his presidential address despaired of seeing a united nation so long as caste distinction prevailed; "the rigid system of caste" he said, "which has eroded the vitals of this country, will ever act as a heavy drag on one race towards a brighter future". He observed that, 'caste feeling is of the same kind as national feeling, but its mischief consists

in its being confined to a small community....³⁶. But Ranade who represented the sentiments and fears of the majority of the Conference did not take a strong stand against caste organization of society. For most of the reformers 'the line of least resistance' defined the direction in which social change should proceed as well as its method and pace³⁷.

Congress leaders like Dada Bhai Naoroji and Surendranath Banerjee shared views with Tilak regarding social reform being incompatible with nationalism and held that the Congress should not only ignore social reform but also adopt open hostility to Social Conference. Malbari's campaign for the raising of age of marriage gave Tilak the opportunity to launch a crusade against social reformers. The 'Hinduism in danger' cry found the backbone of most of the opposition arguments. Tilak led an unscrupulous attack on the supporters of the bill. His newspaper set the tone of orthodoxy outraged and nationalism insulted by the threats of Government intervention in Hindu social practices³⁸. He urged Gokhale to give up 'the doctrine of the equality of mankind and insistence on effacing all caste distinctions in education' and argued that 'revolt against the caste system could be countered only by removing education from the hands of the government and transferring it to the hands of private bodies, which would in turn introduce national education'³⁹. There was constant pressure from anti-reformists to abandon reforms on caste and women. Ultimately the reformists had to succumb to the anti-reformist threat of splitting the congress. Surendranath Banerjee applauded Ranade's 'noble sacrifice' by not 'averting a crisis which might have proved disastrous to the best interest of the Congress'⁴⁰. He further proclaimed that "The unwritten customary law of the Congress proclaimed, no matter what differences of opinion may exist amongst us as regards religious beliefs or social usage, they shall be no bar to our acting together in Congress - - they shall not be permitted to interrupt the cordiality of our relation as Congressmen"⁴¹. For most of the nationalist, social reform and political reform were incompatible. Moreover Tilak standing on the foundation of anti-social reform, popularized religious festivals to articulate political nationalism which we shall see later. So this unity among the nationalists by not taking up issues which threatened their position exposed the cleavages in society, gave them a confidence to show a vague sense of unity and homogeneity.

Many nationalists articulated the ideology of nationalism as attainment of a grand Vedic golden age and glorification of Varna system. Aurobindo wrote that, “Hindu civilization being spiritual based its institutions on spiritual and moral foundations and subordinated the material elements and material considerations. Caste therefore was not an institution which ought to be immune from the cheap second-hand denunciations so long in fashion, but a supreme necessity without which Hindu Civilization could not have developed its distinctive character as worked out in its unique mission”⁴². Therefore, ‘the aim of the nationalist’, according to Aurobindo, ‘is to restore the spiritual greatness of a nation by the essential preliminary of its political generation’⁴³. Lala Lajpat Rai wrote, ‘the need of restoring the ancient spirit of Varnashrama system with the change dictated by modern conditions of life’⁴⁴. Tilak saw caste distinctions being originally planned on the principle of division of labour and not the present system of discrimination, and compared it to the guild system of Europe. Though he declared at a conference of the Depressed Classes that, ‘If God was to tolerate untouchability, I would not recognize him as God at all’, refused to sign a memorandum for the removal of untouchability. Tilak believed that issue of self-government should not be harnessed to the goal of abolition of caste which would take centuries to achieve it because Buddhists had attempted to root out the system in ancient times, but had failed⁴⁵.

Anti-social reform politics of the nationalists was anti secular in content and nature. Secularization stood for dismantling of traditional social order. For Congress nationalist, political reforms and social reforms were mismatched. A national movement which refuses to touch social as well as economic question and harps on religion to marshal political support tends to be inherently anti secular. The reformers’ efforts to reform social evil practices, establishment of educational institutions and spread education among the lower castes and girls with the assistance of the colonial state was opposed by Tilak and other anti reformist. They interpreted it as interference in the religious affairs against the crown policy of non-interference. Pushing the secular agenda to background Tilak recruited Hindu deities for political mobilization. The political transformation that India underwent from seventeenth to nineteenth century had disproportionately

empowered the Brahmins and other upper castes. Inserting politics into religious festivals by Tilak was an attempt to bring Brahman and non-Brahman, Congress and the traditional masses together⁴⁶.

GANAPATHI FESTIVALS AND COW PROTECTION

In a multi-religious country like India secularism is interpreted as the harmony among the various religious communities. Cordial relations existed between the Hindus and Muslims in the celebration of festivals. During the Muhurram festival Hindu musicians played music and (nautch) girls performed dancing. Hindu laborers lent their bullock carts to carry the symbolic biers (tazias). Hindus also regularly made their own tazias. The tazias of Muslims and Hindus were paraded and immersed together⁴⁷. But the religious nationalism propagated and popularized by Tilak created discord and broke the existing religious harmony. To popularize the Ganapathi festivals Tilak made a number of innovations. Large public images of the God were installed in mandaps, introduced singing parties attached to each public Ganapathis and inserted political songs in the melas. Copying certain aspects of Muharram like the formation of groups attached to public image, the 1894 Ganapati festival was promoted as a counterpart to the Muharram festival by which the organizers hoped to wean away those Hindu artisans, musicians and dancers who had freely participated in the Muharram festival in previous years. Many of the verses sung by the melas of 1894 took an anti-Muslim stand. A typical verse was

Oh! Why have you abandoned today the Hindu religion?
How have you forgotten Ganapati, Shiva and Maruti?
What have you gained by worshipping the tabuts?
What boon has Allah conferred upon you
That you have become Mussalman today?
Do not be friendly to a religion which is alien
Do not give up your religion and be fallen
Do not at all venerate the taboos
The cow is our mother, do not forget her⁴⁸

The original idea of Tilak was to draw Brahmins and the non-Brahmins to make the affair broad based which could be done only by creating the 'other' and demarcate 'us' because there was no common socio-economic interest between Brahmans and non-Brahmans. Since the Brahman and non-Brahman lived in separate wards, the melas were formed on caste or community basis.

Though the non Brahmins melas remained exclusively religious in orientation the Brahmin melas sang verses encouraging the Hindu to boycott the Muharram and in favour of temperance, swadeshi and the programme of the extremist party⁴⁹.

The religion oriented political mobilization was not only anti secular but highly communal. Inserting religion into politics by Tilak not only disturbed the cordial relations that had existed between Muslims and Hindus but was also used to attack the social reformers and for maintaining status quo in the society. As Tejani Shabnum observes: "Ganapathi festivals.....through petitions and memorials, songs, pamphlets, posters and speeches a vocabulary emerged across the presidency that was striking similar in its political and cultural symbols. It was a language that was weighted around the tenets of high-caste Hinduism, including vegetarianism, temperance, and ideas of purity and pollution"⁵⁰.

The religiously oriented political mobilization of the nationalist in Maharashtra not only antagonized the minority Muslim community but also sowed the seeds of communal disharmony. If Ganapathi festivals appealed to the upper castes, it was goddess *Kali* which had greater attraction in Bengal. As the political elevation of Ganasha was linked to the rise of Chitapavan community, 'the upper castes in Bengal were generally followers of Kali worship'⁵¹. Like Tilak, Aurobindo too used religion to mobilize political support. His politics is related to the fear that Muslims will inherit the future because of the decline of upper caste Hindus. He thought in terms that Hindus in the towns in government service and the professions should ally with the rural landed upper castes, so that the urban elites do not lose the leadership of the rural masses⁵². The extremist groups in Bengal which became active during anti-partition movement utilized the *Sakta* cult of Kali for mobilization. Unlike in Bombay, where the use of religious festival was able to wean away the Hindus from participating in Muslim festivals and thus construct a weak vertical Hindu community; in Bengal the lower caste and the Muslims joined together in opposition to upper castes. This is due to 'the gulf between the landed gentry of Bengal, which was largely drawn from the upper castes of Hindu society and the cultivating classes which comprised low caste Hindus and Muslims was too wide to permit the latter to forge an alliance with former in movement against the British government'⁵³. Instead of building a

broad movement aligning the castes and religion, the national politics was moving in the direction of breaking the existing harmonious relations between the lower castes and the Muslim. The political mobilization through religious symbols alienated Muslims and incorporated the lower castes as foot soldiers against the Muslims. Communalism as a conflict between two pan-Indian religious communities i.e., Hindus and Muslims was not a national phenomena. Religious conflicts still remained local because pan-Indian Muslim community or identity did not exist. Like the lower castes the Muslims were also disempowered and impoverished masses.

The rise of religious nationalism in the nineteenth should be seen in the background of the assertion by the lower castes. The nationalists in Maharashtra stood in opposition to social reforms. They had criticized women's education on one hand and on the other upheld caste system. Standing on the strong politics of anti-reformism and glorification of antique social order the politicization of religious festivals had two important outcomes: one popularizing Hindu festivals by the upper castes projected a unified Hindu community by bringing the lower castes. Two, weaning away lower castes from Muslims prevented to forge any political alliance challenging the domination of the upper castes. Similar outcomes can be seen in other provinces too and the manipulation of the lower castes by upper caste Hindu ideologues.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyaya has shown that Namasudras an untouchable caste group in Bengal rose against upper castes by boycotting them, denying them forced labour and demanding recognition of status. They along with Muslims showed disinterest in national politics and stayed away from *bhadralok swadeshi* movement. When a call was given by the Congress to boycott foreign cloth in protest against the partition of Bengal in 1905, the Namasudras, an untouchable caste in Bengal together with the Muslims did not respond in support of the movement. Guruchand one of the leaders of Namasudra movement emphasized that those nationalist leaders who were now trying to secure their support for the *Swadeshi* movement, had not uttered a single word against the inhuman treatment meted out towards them by the Brahmins and the Kayasthas. For a long time, the Namasudras had been outcastes of the society. So only when they were

given a place of honor, would they come forward with full vigour to serve the country. Hence, if the nationalist really wanted the Namasudras to support their political movement, they should first wage a battle to obliterate social inequalities, which they were not prepared to do⁵⁴. But in the 1920s when the issue of music before mosques cropped up untouchable castes like mahishyas were mobilized against Muslims⁵⁵.

The cow protection movement was another important movement in Punjab which demanded the end of cow slaughter in British India. It gained momentum when Arya Samaj founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati took up this issue. He along with his followers travelled across India which led to the establishment of cow protection societies in various regions of India starting at 1882. The cow protection movement was about 'inventing a common symbol across castes among the Hindus (though it involved vilification of chamars who dealt with the skin of dead cattle) as about defining a cow-protecting Hinduism against a cow-killing Islam'⁵⁶. The movement of cow protection spread to other parts of India especially Bihar and United Province. The sacrifice of cows by Muslims was demonized and inflammatory pamphlets were distributed. This resulted in massive riots in 1893. The rioting was precipitated by contradictory interpretations of a British local magistrate's order⁵⁷. Series of violent incidences also resulted in a riot in Bombay involving the working classes. An estimated thirty-one to forty-five communal riots broke out over six months and a total of 107 people were killed⁵⁸. The spread of cow protection is closely associated with the rise of sudra castes like ahirs, kurmis and koeris and chamars and the general decline of upper castes. The lower castes displayed their assertion by acquiring land, wearing sacred thread, rejecting forced unpaid labour. 'In this context of a declining elite and a resurgent sudra caste like the ahirs (engaged with the cattle economy), the central issue became the Bakr Id killing cows by Muslims in 1893. The defence of the cow became the rallying cry to bring together declining elites and militant subalterns among the Hindus against a Muslim community seen narrowly as 'butchers' observes Dilip Menon⁵⁹.

Subsequent politics of nationalism in the twentieth century under the leadership of Gandhi saw profound changes. His advent and taking up the issue of

Khilafat to bring Hindu-Muslim unity, his idea of social harmony, and his conception of religion, Varnashramadharma and untouchability have far reaching consequences which haunts post-independent India even today. What are the changes that took place under Gandhian leadership? What was his conception of the caste system? and how did he approach communal problem? are some of the questions to be analyzed here.

GANDHI AND THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

For the Hindu revivalists and reformers like Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Tilak and other nationalists, Hinduism and caste system was inseparable. Caste was compared to the western guild system and Christian sects. In continuation of brahmanic Hindu revivalism Gandhi championed caste system. He wrote in 1916 that 'caste was a perfectly natural institution.....invested with religious meaning. These being my views I am opposed to the movements which are being carried on for the destruction of the system'⁶⁰. Gandhi's worldview, politics, religion, spirituality and human emancipation revolved around his conception of Varnashramadharma. He wrote:

“Varna means pre-determination of the choice of man's profession. The law of varna is that a man shall follow the profession of his ancestors for earning his livelihood. Every child naturally follows the 'colour' of his father, or chooses his father's profession. Varna therefore is in a way the law of heredity. Varna is not a thing that is superimposed in the Hindus, but men who were trustees for their welfare discovered the law for them. It is not a human invention, but an immutable law of nature – the statement of a tendency that is ever present and at work like Newton's law of gravitation. Just as the law of gravitation existed even before it was discovered so did the law of varna. It was given to the Hindus to discover that law. By their discovery and application of certain laws of nature, the peoples of the West have easily increased their material possessions. Similarly, Hindus by their discovery of this irresistible social tendency have been able to achieve in the spiritual field what no other nation in the world has achieved⁶¹.

For Gandhi human nature is Varnashrama, attached to birth and cannot be changed by choice. To change varna is to 'disregard the law of heredity'⁶².

Varnashramadharma was all encompassing ideal which answered all the ills of society inherent and induced by colonialism. He said,

“Varnashramadharma ...satisfies the religious, social and economic needs of a community. It satisfies the religious needs, because a whole community accepting the law is free to devote ample time to spiritual perfection. Observance of the law obviates social evil and entirely prevents the killing economic competition. And if it is regarded as a law laying down, not the rights or the privileges of the community governed by it, but their duties, it ensures the fairest possible distribution of wealth, though it may not be an ideal, i.e. strictly equal distribution. Therefore, when people in disregard of the law mistake duties for privileges and try to pick and choose occupations for self-advancement, it leads to confusion of varna and ultimate disruption of society”⁶³.

Varnashramadharma and Hinduism were inseparable for Gandhi. He said: “Everyone will admit that Hinduism is nothing without the law of varna and ashrama. It would be impossible to find any Smriti work of which a large part was not devoted to Varnashrama Dharma. This law of varna and ashrama is to be traced to our most ancient scriptures – the Vedas, and so no one who call himself a Hindu may ignore it”⁶⁴. He considered caste system as a healthy division of birth and one must continue the hereditary occupation if not, it will create confusion. ‘What I mean is’ Gandhi said, one born as a scavenger must earn his livelihood by being a scavenger, and then do whatever he likes.....That a person creates confusion of caste when he leaves his hereditary calling is obvious. When a Brahmin begins to earn his bread by, say, following the profession of a barber or engineer, he does create confusion of caste, as much as when a barber or an engineer begins to impart religious instructions as means of livelihood’⁶⁵. The degeneration of the system should not be reason for destroying caste. In Harijan he wrote, ‘it is wrong to destroy caste because of the outcaste, as it would destroy a body because of an ugly growth in it, or of a crop because of the weeds’⁶⁶.

Like the revivalists the problem with modern caste system was the existence of innumerable castes. The remedy according to Gandhi for the emergence of

infinite castes was to fuse smaller castes into one big caste so that four big castes are produced as the old system of four Varnas. He said, "It is certainly necessary that the numerous castes should become fewer, and this can be brought about by the councils of the various castes without injury to Hinduism. If the various divisions of Banias were together and their members marry among themselves, that will not harm religion in any way"⁶⁷. Accordingly the problem of exploitative caste system was reduced to anti-untouchability which did not consist of mixing or interdining. Gandhi's anti-untouchability meant that the untouchables will be classed as Shudras instead of classed as Ati-Shudras⁶⁸. Varnashrama was inherent in human nature and the religion which reduced it to science is Hinduism. Hinduism and Brahmanism were synonymous. For Gandhi undermining 'Brahmanism was to undermine Hinduism'⁶⁹. He held that Brahmins were the finest flowers of Hinduism and humanity and that he would not have the non-Brahmins to rise on the ruins of Brahmins⁷⁰. The religious, social and economic needs of the community centered around the Varnashrama. Caste system was Hinduism. For Gandhi annihilation of Caste is annihilation of Hinduism: He said: "The caste system, in my opinion, has a scientific basis. Reason does not revolt against it..... I can find no reason for their (castes) abolition. To abolish caste is to demolish Hinduism"⁷¹ In the Gujrathi Journal *Nava Jivan* Gandhi has comprehensively written about caste system. He wrote

1. Believe that if Hindu Society has been able to stand it because it is founded on the caste system.
2. The seeds of Swaraj are to be found in the caste system. Different castes are like different sections of military division. Each division is working for the good of the whole.
3. A community which can create the caste system must be said to possess unique power of organisation.
4. Caste has a ready made means for spreading primary education. Every caste can take the responsibility for the education of the children of the caste. Caste has a political basis. It can work as an electorate for a representative body. Caste can perform judicial functions by electing persons to act as judges to decide

disputes among members of the same caste. With caste it is easy to raise a defence force by requiring each caste to raise a brigade.

5. I believe interdining or intermarriage are not necessary for promoting national unity. That dining together creates friendship is contrary to experience. If this was true there would have been no war in Europe....Taking food is as dirty an act as answering the call on nature. The only difference is that after answering call of nature we get peace while after eating food we get discomfort. Just as we perform the act of answering the call of nature in seclusion so also the act of taking food must also be done in seclusion.
6. In India children of brothers do not intermarry. Do they cease to love because they do not intermarry? Among the Vaishnavas many women are so orthodox that they will not eat with the members of the family nor will they drink water from a common water pot. Have they no love? The caste system cannot be said to be bad because it does not allow inter-dining or intermarriage between castes.
7. Caste is another name for control. Caste puts a limit on enjoyment. Caste does not allow a person to transgress caste limits in pursuit of his enjoyment. That is the meaning of such restrictions as interdining and intermarriage.
8. To destroy caste system and adopt Western European social system means that Hindus must give up the principle of hereditary occupation which is the soul of the caste system. Hereditary principle is an eternal principle. To change it is to create disorder. I have no use for a Brahmin if I cannot call him a Brahmin for my life. It will be a chaos if every day a Brahmin is to be changed into a Shudra and a Shudra is to be changed into a Brahmin.

9. The caste system is a natural order of society. In India it has been given a religious coating. Other countries not having understood the utility of the Caste system it existed only in a loose condition and consequently those countries have not derived from caste system the same degree of advantage which India has derived. These being my views I am opposed to all those who are out to destroy Caste System⁷².

Gandhi's economic and political ideas too, corroborate his social ideals. He severely condemned modern civilization and viewed 'western civilization as the creation of satan'⁷³. This ideal of eliminating class war is by improving the relationship between employers and employees and between landlords and tenants. 'The Kisan movement' Gandhi wrote, 'must be confined to the improvement of status of the kisans and the betterment of the relations between the zamindars and them. The kisans must be advised scrupulously to abide by the terms of their agreement with the zamindars, whether such is written or inferred from custom'⁷⁴. For Gandhi, the landlords need not give up their property, but only have to declare themselves trustees for the poor. Varnashrama dharma possessed the competition free economic life. He opined that "to destroy Caste system and adopt Western European social system means that the Hindu must give up the principle of hereditary occupation which is the soul of Caste system". Further he observed "the Varna system is connected with the way of earning a living. There is no harm if a person belonging to one Varna acquires the knowledge or science or art specialized by person belonging to other Varnas. But as far as the earning of his living is concerned he must follow the occupation of the Varna to which he belongs, which means he must follow the hereditary profession of his fore forefathers". The economic object of Varna system according to Gandhi was: "to prevent competition and class struggle and class wars. I believe in Varna system because it fixes the duties and occupations of persons. Varna means determination of man's occupations before he is born. In the Varna system no man has any liberty to choose his occupation. His occupation is determined for him by hereditary"⁷⁵ Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru too reached similar conclusions that the economic factors were the basic factor to

caste system and all other factors were its phenomenal superstructure. In the *Discovery of India*, he wrote: "Caste system does not stand by itself; it is a part, and an integral part of a much larger scheme of social organization. It may be possible to remove some of its obvious abuses and to lessen its rigidity, and yet to leave the system intact. But that is highly unlikely, as the social and economic forces at play are not much concerned with its Superstructure; they are attacking at the base and undermining the other supports which held it up"⁷⁶.

Gandhi's philosophy possessed all the ingredients required to maintain status quo. As Ambedkar says, 'Gandhi has outdone the most orthodox of orthodox Hindus'⁷⁷. The lower caste had no aspirations according to Gandhi. He wrote, 'the Shudra who only serves (the higher caste) as a matter of religious duty, and who will never own any property, who indeed has not even the ambitions to own anything, is deserving thousand obeisance..... The very Gods will shower down flowers on him'⁷⁸. Ramarajya was Gandhi's political ideal. He called the English Parliament a 'sterile women and a prostitute'⁷⁹ because ministers were changed frequently. A modern secular state and institutions have to be democratic. The premise of modern democracy was the absence of hereditary claims to power, hereditary social organisation and hereditary exploitation. In short egalitarianism is reflected in the socio-economic and political spheres. Periodically the people get power to change their rulers. Moreover the claim to political power is open to the masses. Unfortunately democratization doesn't fit Gandhi's socio-political ideas of Varnashramadharma. As Ambedkar says: "Gandhism may well be suited to a society which does not accept democracy as its ideal. A society which does not believe in democracy may be indifferent to machinery and the civilization based upon it. But a democratic society cannot. The former may well content itself with life of leisure and culture for the few and a life of toil and drudgery for the many. But a democratic society must assure a life of leisure and culture to each one of its citizens"⁸⁰.

Caste system, trusteeship and Ramarajya were the edifice of Gandhian social, economic and political ideals. These being his ideals the national movement under his leadership faced two important issues – one, the question of communalism and two, the question of caste. The religious revivalism and religion

oriented politics before the advent of Gandhi had aggravated problem of communal harmony. Lower castes were emerging, challenging and questioning the brahmanized Hinduism, denial of education, civil rights and political power⁸¹. The approach to political problems was tinged with religiosity. The two vital problems, the question of communalism and the question of lower castes were not political problems for Gandhi, but religious problems. Whether Hindu or Muslim, religious identity constituted the primary identity for him. He said, 'I hold my religion dearer than my country andtherefore I am a Hindu first and nationalist after'⁸². Again speaking to the Mussalmans of India he said that, 'brave (Ali) Brothers are staunch lovers of their country, but they are Mussalmans first and everything else afterwards. It must be so with every religious minded man'⁸³. Ravinder Kumar has pointed out that Gandhi drew Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities into nationalist politics as communities, which widened instead of narrowing religious and communitarian cleavages in Indian society⁸⁴. To understand Gandhi's approach to communal and lower caste problem, the analysis of Khilafat and Vaikom Satyagrah agitation will help us as he was closely associated with these two movements.

Gandhi's approach to communal problem was to construct political communities of Hindus and Muslims and fuse them with an anti British agenda. Their common political participation and expression would unite them. One such attempt was taking up the Khilafat issue. Khilafat was an ephemeral issue taken up by Gandhi to build an anti-colonial alliance to bring Hindus and Muslims together. Like the lower castes there was no homogeneity among Indian Muslims. They were divided by regional, language, class or sectarian basis. But the common factor among Indian Muslims was Islam, with it a symbol of solidarity: the community of believers, the Ummah; its symbolic head the Khalif, its central place of pilgrimage, Mecca; its scripture, the Quran; its sacred law, the Shari'a; and its local reference point, the mosque⁸⁵. Their common set of symbols offered political leaders to mobilize Indian Muslims for pan-Indian constitution with pan-Islamic ideology. As Gail Minault says: 'The Khilafat movement was primarily a campaign by a particular group of Indian Muslim leaders to unite their community politically by means of religion and cultural

symbols meaningful to all strata of that community. As such it can be viewed as a quest for pan-Indian Islam'⁸⁶.

The westernized elites of Aligarh like Muhammed Ali, Maulana Abdul Basi of Firangi Mahal, Maulana al-Hasan of Deoband and their alliance with Gandhi and Congress gave them recognition as the spokesmen for Muslim community. As part of propagating Khilafat issue two all India bodies were formed: Khilafat Committee and Jamait of Ulema. Though Jamait of Ulema remained anti-British, their emphasis remained the religious guidance for Muslims and their promotion of solidarity and self-consciousness as a community. Ulema and Sufis were the chief messengers of the movement in predominantly Muslim areas. The Khilafat's support to non co-operation was made a religious duty. Fatwas were issued stating that co-operation with enemies of Islam as religiously unlawful. Non co-operation was defined as Jihad by Maulana Qutubuddin in Khilafat conference in Lucknow 1921⁸⁷.

The religious appeals helped to create a pan-Indian Muslim identity and the contribution of Ulema was invaluable. More importantly the Ulemas participation in national politics gave them political legitimacy as heads of their religion. Instead of uniting Hindus and Muslims, it only heightened the consciousness of the Muslims that they were distinct from the Hindus. As Prabha Dixit says, 'the Khilafat propaganda did not result in the growth of any new sense of nationalism amongst the Muslims. On the contrary it only heightened the sense of Muslim identity which proved a great psychological asset for Muslim Leaders in popularizing their separatist ideology'⁸⁸. The outcome of Gandhi's adventure with Khilafat only helped in the creation of pan-Indian Muslim community. From then onwards Hindu Muslim communalism became an irreversible part of Indian politics.

Like Hindu-Muslim unity, the lower caste problem was also looked through religious spectacles by Gandhi. The most important movement Gandhi associated was Vaikom Satyagraha which was resorted to get the right to pass through public roads. Vaikom Satyagraha was not initiated by Gandhi; It was forced upon him by T. K. Madhavan, the Ezhava leader of Travancore⁸⁹. The civil rights issue of passing through public roads, where dogs and pigs enjoyed as P. Palpu said, was made a religious issue by Gandhi. Over and above, he

wanted to make that agitation purely a Hindu phenomenon. The Vaikkam satyagraha was a movement where Muslims, Christians and Sikhs participated. Financial help had come from non-Hindus. Sikhs were running free kitchen for the satyagrahis. In the process an alliance of all the communities was being formed. But Gandhi objected to the non-Hindus participation. When leaders like Madhavan and K. P. Keshava Menon who were leading the movement were arrested, George Joseph continued the struggle. Gandhi took exception to his leadership and wrote in Young India, 'exception has been taken to Mr. Joseph-a Christian having been allowed to replace Mr. Menon as the leader and organiser. In my humble opinion the exception is perfectly valid'⁹⁰.

According to T. K. Ravindran, Gandhi's contention that Satyagraha at Vaikkam 'is a penance on the part of the caste Hindus' amounted to converting a major issue into a inconsequential one and his opinion that non-Hindus should disassociate themselves from Vaikom Satyagraha was responsible for reducing the issue into a cheap religious dispute. 'As a result of this religious objection raised by Gandhi the vitals that sustained the spirit of Vaikkam satyagraha were abruptly snapped. The free kitchen started by the patriotic Akalis, which served food for thousands of people every day in the Satyagraha camp, was closed. More particularly his objection to Christians and Muslims participating in the Satyagraha, created a crisis in the whole movement. He prevented George Joseph, the brain that guided the struggle after the arrest of T.K.Mahadevan and K.P.Kesava Menon from offering Satyagraha and courting arrest for the sake of the untouchables of Kerala'⁹¹.

The political theology of Gandhi claims to transcend social conflict and build a consensus on religious harmony. Anti secularist and intellectuals who reject secularism as a western concept looked towards Gandhian religious orientation for modern secular practice. According to Nandy Gandhi called himself Sanatani or orthodox Hindu and gave space for other religious practices in public. He sees religious tolerance in Gandhian politico-religious practice⁹². This kind of reading of is basically false reading because intolerance is inbuilt in politico-religious discourse of Gandhi. Gandhi called himself *Sanatani* Hindu, because he said

- (1) I believe in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Puranas* and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in *avatars* and rebirth;
- (2) I believe in the *varnashrama dharma* in a sense, in my opinion, strictly *Vedic* but not in its present popular and crude sense;
- (3) I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular;
- (4) I do not disbelieve in idol worship⁹³.

He defined Sanatani Hindu is one 'who believes in God, immortality of the soul, transmigration, the law of Karma and Moksha, and who tries to practice Truth and Ahimsa in daily life, and therefore practices cow-protection in its widest sense and understand and tries to act according to the law of Varnashrama'⁹⁴.

Gandhian quasi religious discourse is pregnant with anti-secularisation because firstly, the four fold Varnashramadharma is the bedrock of his religious, social, economic and political ideals. It is an irrational social order which is intolerant to the egalitarian aspirations of the lower castes. Varnashramadharma as socio-economic principle meant that spheres of activity are predetermined. This was to prevent competition and uphold the exploitative, unjust socio-economic order. Secondly Gandhian politico-religious mobilization did not result in forging any secular relationship between various caste and religious communities. The fragile Hindu Muslim unity that Gandhi attempted to build was build unity from the top⁹⁵. Hindu-Muslim alliance did not mean that the masses of Hindus and Muslims interacted with each other to form a new political community. As a national leader he did not appeal directly to the masses. Instead he appealed through the Muslim leaders. During the height of his popularity he said, "During these days of great trial for me I have felt the gravest need of Moulana Shaukat Ali by my side. I can wield no influence over the Mussalmans except through a Mussalman" and '..... to think of placating the Mussalmans without placating the (Ali) Brothers is to attempt to ignore Islam in India'⁹⁶. His refusal to speak to the Muslim masses directly and only through their leaders amounted

to an expectation that Muslims too had to speak to Hindus only through him. Gandhian religious toleration meant accepting the respective leadership of their community. If talking to the Muslim masses without Ali Brothers consent was to ignore Islam, the corollary logic would be Ali Brothers talking to Hindu masses without the consent of Gandhi would be ignoring Hinduism in India. Thirdly Gandhian religious toleration did not involve reciprocation of assistance. Mass interaction between religious communities was not only disallowed but Gandhi personally intervened in preventing non-Hindu masses interacting with lower caste Hindus. This is quite evident in Vaikkam Satyagraha episode. Gandhi never allowed non-Hindus to participate in upliftment of lower castes and also in giving any financial help.

In a multi religious state like India secularism is articulated as equal respect for all religions. Hinduism which emerged under orientalist/pundit collaborative exercise, revived and crystallized by Vivekananda, Dayananda Saraswati and Aurobindo, now became a new tool of political mobilization for capturing state power. From Tilak to Gandhi religious mobilization and uncritical acceptance of caste system was the hall mark of their national politics. Religious mobilization which breaks communal harmony and prevents alliance of the masses of various religious communities cannot be called in secular in any sense. Religious mobilization in itself cannot be judged secular or communal. Its intent, content and outcome becomes the crucial factor for analysis. Religious toleration and communal harmony cannot be constructed if the masses are prevented to form a common socio-political interest. Democratization of society, religion and politics are the pillars on which secular states have to be built. Hence the Indian national struggle had to be 'anti-imperialist as well as anti-feudal'⁹⁷.

The two centuries of colonial rule had disproportionately empowered the Brahmins and other upper castes. The congress led national movement could forge a common socio-political interest among the scattered diverse upper castes. Religious mobilization for political power inherently excludes other religious communities. Vertical mobilization of religious communities without any structural or democratic changes or agenda was forged by Gandhi. In a horizontal mobilization the lower castes, Muslims and other exploited masses could forge an

alternative political development. This would not only have challenged the colonial rule but also would have led to democratization of society and religion. In the process the colonially empowered upper castes who sustained their domination through religion, culture and economy would also be challenged. Perhaps Gandhi was aware of the revolutionary potential of lower castes and Muslims political alliance. Therefore when Ramsay Mac Donald announced 'Communal Award' Gandhi said that the separate 'electorate will create division among Hindus..... untouchable hooligans will make common cause with Muslim hooligans and kill caste Hindus'⁹⁸.

In a secular state religion becomes one among different aspects of individual life in society. Brahmanism, Hinduism and caste system had become synonymous for leading nationalists in general and Gandhi in particular. The cry of the anti secularist is that public expression of religion does not find space in modernist secular practice. What they forget to mention is that religions revivalists, nationalists and communalists had one thing in common i.e., they did not make any distinction between religion and the caste system. What was publicly expressed religion was an assertion of their caste authority. If nationalism is considered as an ideology of secularization, Indian nationalism under congress was an ideology of anti-secularization. Instead of secularizing the power, authority and privileges of the upper castes Indian nationalism reasserted their power, authority and privileges which was sanctioned, justified and upheld by Hindu religion.

'The history of Indian national Movement', says K. N. Panikkar 'is also a history of the communalization of Indian society. That the colonial rulers actively encouraged and aided this process is undoubtedly true, but it was essentially a result of the weakness and inadequacy of secularism as conceived and practiced during the anti-colonial struggle'⁹⁹. Nationalism instead of struggling against communal and obscurantist forces, was itself associated with the reactionary Hindu orthodoxy. 'The national leaders' observes R.P. Dutt, 'in practice were the champions of social reaction and superstition of caste division and privilege, as the allies of the 'black forces' seeking to hold down the antiquated pre-British social and ideological fetters upon the people in the name of high flown mystical 'national appeal'¹⁰⁰.

Indian Nationalism was constructed around Brahminical idioms of the majority Hindu community. 'Hindu identity was' also 'defined by those who were part of this national consciousness and drew on their idealized image of themselves resulting in an upper caste, Brahmana-dominated identity' says Romila Thapar¹⁰¹. As such, Indian nationalism was a genuine transformation of Brahminism to Hindu nationalism, a rhetorical vision of unified Hindu society whose ultimate purpose was to serve fundamental social values of Hinduism.

Congress's lack of response to democratic ideals¹⁰², insensitiveness to the aspirations of the lower castes, and the justification of caste system, the anti-colonial nationalism of Congress was more to arrest the forces of social change. It was antithetically oriented to the aspirations of lower castes but tried to overwhelm the purpose of freeing India from British. Nationalism replaces religious based identity. Political ideology of Nationalism constantly struggles against religiously sanctioned social order. But Indian national movement led by congress especially under leadership of Gandhi instead of replacing religious institutions with modern secular political and social institutions, the religious institutions of varnashramadharma became the blueprint for socio-political organization. Religious morality on the basis of hierarchical varna order defined and filled the secular institutions of state and government bureaucracy. A method had been found here to reinforce caste based division and domination of Brahminical culture over all the subaltern cultures by constructing an overwhelming category of 'us' and opposed category of 'other'. Seen in this way the communal politics of post-independent India seems to be inspired continuation of pre-independent Congress politics.

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102. Ramaswamy Naicker the leader of Justice Party in Madras province questions the democratic principles of Congress. He asks: "our basic principle in politics is that there should be even handed justice, equal rights and equality of opportunity to all. I ask whether the Congress which is the extreme political party in this country has adopted this principle. If so how is it that in the Congress today Brahmins have the dominating position and all others only the right to lift up their hands in agreement whenever they are asked to do so". John R. Mclane, *The Political Awakening in India*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), p 165.

CHAPTER - VI

CONTEXTUALIZING SECULARISM IN INDIA

The question concerning the conceptual utility of secularism by which the major problem of inter-religious strife can be addressed has aroused great interest and vivid discussion amongst scholars. The consensus among scholars seemed to vote for secularism as religious harmony. A continuous feature of Indian politics since the beginning of national movement has been the question whether secular identities can provide an alternative national identity. Communal articulation of politics and the rise of caste politics have unleashed violent retribution on both the minorities and the lower castes and tribes. Along with minority bashing one can notice the rise of caste panchayts (khap panchyats), regulating food habits, prevention of inter caste marriages, honor killing for dishonoring caste rules etc. While some barriers are broken in urban setting, many continue to persist in rural India. While the secular, socialist and democratic principles enshrined in the constitution demand equality of outcomes, the inherent caste-related inequality continues to dominate reality in Indian society. While writings on secularism have fostered a political dissent on efficacy of secular politics overriding religious articulation of politics there is a great reticence by the intellectuals as well as secular parties on the violence unleashed on the lower castes. Post independent scholarship on secularism by postulating it as religious tolerance have obscured fundamental contradictions existing in the majority religion which are anathema to secularism. The debate is no more about the question of religious harmony. It is whether one can live as a citizens without religious and caste restrictions.

The term 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' as used by nationalist in pre independent India and by academicians, political parties and communal organizations in the post independent India was not in vogue up to eighteenth century. When N. Halhed translated Manu Dharmasastras it was titled the 'The laws of the

Gentoos'. The oriental studies by major British scholars like William Jones, N. Halhed and Henry Colebrook in concentrating the reconstruction of Indian languages, religion and customs led them to conclude that Hinduism was a highly evolved religion. Like the pope and bishops who are the authorities of Christianity the Orientalist fostering of Sanskrit texts was an acknowledgement to the Brahmins as religious authorities of Hinduism. Unlike the Semitic religions Hinduism was not a revealed religion. It was a polytheistic religion without a founder, sacred book or an ecclesiastical organization. But the Orientalists found it tied to caste and a unique feature of Hinduism. To fit into their pre conceived notion of monolithic religion the efforts of the Orientalists with the help of the Brahmins went on to define modern Hinduism. As Romila Thapar explains in a celebrated essay 'Syndicated Hinduism': 'Hinduism is different from other major world religions in that it has no founder and no founding text. Indeed, the idea that Hinduism constitutes a single system is a very recent idea, dating from the arrival of the British in Bengal in the 18th century. Used to western systems of faith, early colonial scholars organized many of the disparate, overlapping multiplicity of non-Abrahamic religious practices, cults, myths, festivals and rival deities that they encountered across south Asia into a new world religion that they described as "Hinduism"¹.

To start our secular discourse without historically looking at the radical changes that religion and the state underwent during colonial rule would be sacrificing social reality. Suvira Jaiswas has argued that 'Hinduism and its amorphous, all-inclusive character cannot be understood unless the social structure of those who came to be known as 'Hindu' and were regarded as believers of 'Hinduism' is taken into consideration. For, the unifying and identifying factor was provided by the institution of caste which had the power to communicate or admit an individual or group and not acceptance or rejection of any moral or philosophical doctrine....The brahmanical paradigm of social integration was well established. It operated through the varna ideology. The alien and marginal peoples were incorporated into the network of castes without doing any damage to their internal kin-structure, customs, belief-systems, etc., and they attained a status commensurate with their socio-economic condition'². The Relationship

between the state, religion and caste has to take into account relationship between the oriental pundits' construction of religion and the colonial state. The transition from the Mughul state to the establishment of the colonial state also marked the unifying and systematization of Hindu religion, customs and practices. This transition is a break from the pre-colonial state formation which means the fragmentary nature of Indian society and state were united under the modern state apparatus. As Aloysius says, "Structural unification has been effected by the British through a process of bureaucratization of the extended and enlarged polity replacing the multiple warlord aristocracy..... structural unification simply meant the removal of the discontinuity between the social and political. The social base and the political superstructure became continuous, albeit under the aegis of colonial regime. By transforming the dominant castes within society, who had hitherto maintained their hereditary hierarchical dominance through religio-cultural ideology in the scattered polities, into a unified bureaucracy for administration with effective power, the British abridged the gulf between social dominance and state power and also provided the former with a new secular legitimating ideology"³.

Hinduism as a religion became increasingly formulated and systematized through the translation of Sanskrit codes of laws and its implementation through administrative agencies. This development is very important in the background of a fragmented state and polity. Fundamental unity of the state and society revolved around the religion and practices of the dominant castes which enabled the religiously oriented Hindus with secular aspects of life. Engulfing all the lower castes, tribals and non-Muslim and non-Christian population into one monolithic religion enabled the modernized dominant Hindus to have immense influence in social and political life. In a highly stratified society where society was divided into various castes, the emerging upper castes in the secular aspects of life played no role in condemning the highly stratified order. Instead one can see the politics of the dominant class in breaking the cordial relations that existed between the lower castes and the Muslims. This new class generally called under the rubric of 'middle class in India' was so interwoven with the state structure that they became the new stake holders in preventing the lower castes in sharing

political power and public space as well as preventing the state in undertaking any amelioration policy for the lower orders of the society. They were the new class of rulers with political jurisdiction. 'Bureaucratization is the process by which social dominance acquired state-power in India'⁴.

If varna order was the main thrust of the religion it was always under constant friction with anti varna forces. As such one can locate anti-varna, anti-caste movements, egalitarian ideologies and religion in the history of India. Systematic political organization of dalits can be seen in the 19th century. The history of Indian sub-continent has seen the growth of two conflicting ideologies upholding the varna order and the other opposing it. In ancient India Charvakas and Lokayatas opposed religious practices of Brahmins. Gautama Buddha and Mahavira propagated tolerance and non-violence and equal respect to all. They opposed superstitions, inhuman practices and upheld human dignity. Emergence of various religions like Buddhism and Jainism in ancient India, Bhakti movements and emergence of egalitarian religion like Lingayatism and Sikhism in the medieval period has been in opposition to Brahminical religious practices in general and varna social order in particular. As Lal Mani Joshi says: "The history of ancient India is a record of two opposite ideologies, that of world affirmation represented by the priestly brahmanas of the Vedic tradition and that of world-denial and world – transcendence represented by the ascetic sramanas of non-Vedic tradition"⁵. He further says that "there was a constant struggle between Brahmanism and Buddhism right from the days of Buddha to the time of the effacement of Buddhism towards the beginning of the second millennium"⁶.

Theorization of secularism proceeds from the antiquated practices of dominant religion to the process of secularization where the importance of old religion gradually diminishes in the individual and societal life. In the Indian context instead of mechanically approaching western models of secular struggles recent scholarship have been trying to situate the human and rational struggles in religion between two broad traditions, ie., *Brahmanas* and *Sramanas* traditions⁷. According to Satchidanandan 'the *Brahmana* stream represents emphasis on ritual, belief in hierarchisation and priesthood and the resulting inequality, the unquestioning faith in the Vedas as repositories of eternal truth, the monopolization of

certain knowledges through a language seldom known to the majority and the linking of those knowledges to power, secrecy, deformation, mystifying representations and divisive practices imposed on people that are later legitimized and rationalized to seem almost natural or divinely created. Whereas *Sramanas* do not approve of the domination of the *Brahmanas* or accept the authenticity of their texts. Rituals are secondary in their practice: self-realisation and service are primary. They would prefer to speak in popular tongues rather than in Sanskrit or Latin, abhor the idea of hierarchisation through divisive practices like caste, look down upon earthly power and riches and demystify religion by taking it to the people. They interrogate traditional customs, rituals and taboos including, at times, the very idea of temples and idol-worship, not to speak of untouchability and other spatial strategies of distance and differentiation, and believe in basic human equality, or even go beyond it to believe in the equality of all created beings⁸. As an alternative Secularism in India has to be situated in the declining influence of caste in the socio-political spheres. The opposition to the sacralised hierarchical social order should be traced to various traditions and movements which posed a serious challenge to Brahmanism. The adoption of Buddhism by King Ashoka is an early proof of the state patronizing religion which was counter to Brahminical world view.

A general tendency among scholars is to look at Indian history and society through the prism of caste. The varna system was not a universal social order in India. But recent scholarship has shown the flexibility in Indian society. Varna social formation was only one of the several social formations in the sub-continent⁹. Locating social formations in dry zone or hilly regions and wet zone or plain regions recent scholarship have made advances in heterogeneous social formations. Making a contrasting study between dry zones and wet zones Ludden concludes that in dry zones peasants formed 'inter-family cooperation within jatis generated occupationally diverse and locally dominant peasant castes. Shanars were cultivators, merchants, priests, and warriors. Maravas were farmers, fighters, hunters and priests. Vaduga cultivators fought for their land, worked the soil, and served priestly functions, too..... No single caste could control access to land in the dry zone, where dominance depended on close control of labour power by means of kinship, caste patronage, and coercion.

Even dominant caste elites remained cultivators, and even the richest non cultivating landowner would have poor peasant relatives close by. Because landowning, work in the fields, and dominance all went together, getting one's hands dirty in raising crops conferred relatively high status in the dry zone-cultural economy. Any caste could and would work the land'¹⁰. In the wet areas the 'community evolved a highly stratified milieu where access to the means of production was thoroughly identified with caste status. In wet zones... one owned land but did not labour; the other labored without owning even, in many cases, rights to its own labour power'¹¹. So the colonial reconstruction of Indian society *en bloc* through the brahmanical texts and literature which were not codes but norm relating to sacred obligations and ritual requirements were made laws and extending it to areas which were never guided by them; secondly constructing the Hindu religious identity amalgamating the heterogenous religions, sects, cults by excluding Islam and Christianity. Law and religion in India under colonialism were inextricably linked to the Sanskrit texts. To rule by the native laws without disturbing the social institutions the efforts of the Orientalist was to elevate, undefined, scattered and spurious texts to the rank of law books to decide civil and religious disputes. This codification of civil law based on religious texts, classification of population through census placed the individual below the community. As a consequence all non Muslims and non Christians became Hindus valorizing and empowering the Brahmanism and Brahmins. As T.N Madan says: "Those who were counted as Hindus included many religious communities and sects often highly localized such as Jains and the Sikhs. Some of these groups did not call themselves Hindus and were not given to access to high - caste temples because they were considered ritually impure. They were not, however, drastically different from their belief and practice. The census enumerators and other lower-level employees of the government were most Brahmans or drawn from the upper castes and Brahmanized to different degrees and they were instruments in establishing a new Brahmanical hegemony and the notion of Hinduism as an 'all India religion'¹².

ANTI CASTE MOVEMENTS

The political and religious articulation of caste system found its strongest justification in the areas of river valley. The colonial doctrine of not disturbing the social formation of the river valley was extended and universalized to all the

conquered territories. As M.N. Srinivas says: “It is my hunch that the Varna model became more popular during the British period as a result of variety of forces....”¹³ The colonial state forcibly enforced religious traditions and practices thereby stamping modern legal and religious boundaries. The oppressive nature of this new socio-political unity did not go unchallenged. The lower castes struggled to get out of control of religion and their practitioners. The emergence of these emancipatory religions with anti-caste thrust is where we must situate the secular and secularization debate defining the parameters of the relationship between state and religion.

Social reformation in modern India is generally said to begin with Raja Ram Mohan Roy who worked for the abolition of Sati with the help of British. It is preposterous to see the beginning of social reform Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s crusade because long before Roy took up the cause of Sati lower caste women in Kerala had revolted against oppressive humiliating caste tradition. Ezhavas and other lower caste women were not allowed to cover their breast and in 1802 they revolted against the upper castes by covering their breasts¹⁴. Roy and subsequently other reformers in other parts of the country took up those reforms which affected the upper castes. At the same time radical reforms were taken up by lower caste leaders like Jyotiba Phule, Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Ramaswami Naicker, Narayan Guru, Pandit Ramabai, Achutananda, Chatrapathi Shahu who shook the foundations of the caste society. As Aloysius remarks: “The lower caste clusters erupted all-over the sub-continent into a multiplicity of socio-economic and socio-religious movements, diverse though in form, extent and emphasis, having this single trajectory of moving away from the caste-imposed occupational, religio-cultural and educational restrictions and liabilities, and seeking to create either implicitly or explicitly a more homogenized and democratized form of an anonymous civil society”¹⁵. The mainstream scholarships studying their social movements reduce their emancipatory struggles, egalitarian ideas and ideologies to their caste. Comparing the ideas of Narayan Guru and Mahatma Gandhi Omana writes: “It is an irony of history that the man (Narayan Guru) who dedicated his entire life for the cause of abolition of caste is today pinned down to the name of a particular caste group of Kerala as their benefactor,

while Mahatma Gandhi, who ardently believed in the four varnas and the merit of occupational distribution implied in the caste system, is now venerated as the foremost champion against casteism and untouchability”¹⁶.

Secularization is a process where the importance of religion in individual's life and society gradually diminishes. The driving force of lower caste movements for a secular life was freeing themselves from the clutches of caste system. The twin victims of the caste system were the lower castes and women. The thrust of the egalitarian movements led by lower caste leaders was to strike at the varna ideology which kept the lower castes and women in permanent bondage. Defying the orthodoxy Jotirao Phule in later half of the nineteenth century started schools for girls and untouchables¹⁷. Along with his wife Savitribai, Phule formed 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' (Society of Seekers of Truth). He refused to regard the Vedas as sacrosanct. He opposed idolatry and denounced the caste system. Satya Shodhak Samaj propounded the spread of rational thinking and rejected the necessity of the leadership of Brahmans in education and religion. He believed that without overthrowing the unequal and exploitative social system new society cannot be formed based on freedom, equality, brotherhood and human dignity¹⁸. While nationalists like Tilak were opposing girls' education and abolition of child marriage Phule established schools for girls. Unlike the upper caste reformers he practiced what he preached. He campaigned for widow remarriage and opened the gates of his house for the victims of enforced widowhood¹⁹. He reinterpreted religious literature to show that the indigenous people were conquered by Aryans. The nine avatars of Vishnu were seen by him as various stages of Aryan conquest. From those days, the Brahmins have enslaved the Shudras and Ati-shudras. He thought that this system of selfish superstition and bigotry was responsible for the stagnation and all the evils from which India was suffering for centuries.

In the southern state of Kerala lower caste groups called Ezhavas whose main occupation was toddy tapping claimed equality, defied and challenged the brahmanic traditions. A defiant Ezhava group entered Vaikkom temple. For defying the brahmanic tradition they were killed and buried in the corner of the temple compound²⁰. The Ezhava women and their counterparts in Tamilnadu

known as Nadars were subjected to the humiliating custom of partial nakedness. Known as the breast-cloth controversy Ezhava and Nadar women waged a pitched battle with the higher castes and asserted to wear blouses²¹. The most important Ezhava leader who brought far reaching changes in social reform was Sree Narayana Guru. He established SNDP (Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam) and alternative temples under it. He insisted that temples owned by SNDP should admit all devotees without considering their caste or creed. Sree Narayan Guru promoted inter-dining and inter marriages between communities. His teachings strongly denounced discrimination in the name of caste or religion. He emphasised education for all. Sree Narayana Guru's doctrine was "One Caste, One Religion and One God"²². He emphasised the need for modern education and change in their traditional occupation of toddy-tapping. He urged his followers to give up superstitious beliefs and alcoholism.

As a part of the secularisation process Phule and Guru strongly critiqued the social and religious practices of the upper castes. Secularising movements emerged in many parts of India challenging the irrational practices inherent in the Hindu religion. Non-Brahmin movement led by E.V. Ramaswami Naicker in Tamilnadu was one of the most important movements of secularisation. Preceding this movement Iyothee Thass by birth a Paraiyar one of the most polluting caste and later a Buddhist convert is remembered for reviving Buddhism in Tamilnadu²³. He founded the South Indian Buddhist Association. He systematically and strongly critiqued the caste system. Iyothee Thassar's efforts for the democratisation of religion were vehemently rejected by the upper castes. He explained that untouchables were treated as outcastes by the Brahminised castes not because of the notion of purity-pollution but 'it was because of the Buddhism of yore'²⁴. He says that the lower castes who were kept out of the caste system were the followers of the 'casteless and morally unified path of the Buddha' and the conflict between Brahmin and Paraiyar is due to their 'contradictory, religio-ideological commitments and beliefs'²⁵. According to Aloysius Iyothee Thassar did not distinguish the reformation of caste disabilities and the transformation of the social structure. He says, "Subaltern concern – such as the welfare measures for the upliftment of the poor, removal of civil disabilities of the 'outcaste', etc,

are, here seen as being inseparable from those of the social whole; and sectional emancipation is unthinkable without simultaneously effecting an overall structural change. And this was done through subtle shifts in emphasis: from ascriptive groups to organising principles and from sectarian obsession to universal vision. The emancipatory strategies of a religion of the oppressed are necessarily the opposite of those of the oppressors'²⁶. Like Phule he emphasised and campaigned for education. The subsequent movements led by stalwarts like Periyar, Ambedkar and others is the continuation of the legacy of Iyothee Thassar.

The non Brahmin movement and other dalit struggles were guided by the political agenda of human rights and socio-economic equality for the dalit community. E.V. Ramaswami Naicker popularly known as Periyar was a bitter critic of brahminic Hinduism. After being disillusioned for not earnestly taking up social issues he quit the Congress party and started the Self Respect Movement. According to Periyar Hinduism placed many restrictions on men. Through the Self-Respect Movement he critiqued the brahmanic ideology. He showed how Brahmins dominate over all other by evolving a caste system in the name of divine law and by creating several gods and festivals to provide an assured income and prosperity. According to Geetha and Rajadurai the Self-Respect Movement was 'fundamentally opposed to the holy alliance of religion, caste and nationalism an alliance which it understood as embodying a social and political order that was inherently inegalitarian'²⁷. Periyar had dual task of exposing the hidden brahmanical agenda of the congress as well as mobilising the non-brahmans to transform the hierarchical society. Gandhi had advocated the preservation of caste system. For Gandhi if the untouchables were prevented from drawing water from wells and entering temples separate wells and temples should be made for them. As a critic of Gandhi Periyar argued against the Gandhian varna ideals and propagated for the burning of brahmanical scriptures and idols which had created the untouchables and the system of castes. Periyar encouraged inter-caste marriages. Like the nationalist who differentiated social and political issues and did not allow the social problems coming in the way of political unity Periyar did not differentiate social and political problems. He was of the opinion that without bringing radical social changes good government could not be formed.

Bhakti revivalism in North India among the new generation of literate dalits inspired them to formulate counter religion to Hinduism, alternative religious ideology and improve social and economic conditions. In 1920 Adi Hindu ideology was formulated in Uttar Pradesh and Swami Acchutanand was one of the prominent Adi Hindu leaders²⁸. Arya Samaj was active in 'shuddhi' movement ie., to bring back the lower caste converts from other religions. For Arya Samaj Vedas formed the backbone of Hinduism and 'upheld the hierarchical varnashra madharma'. Arya Samaj did not accord equal status for the reconverts²⁹. Disillusioned by Arya Samaj's hierarchical orientation literate untouchables 'formulated the ideology of Adi Hinduism' to 'repudiate vedic Hinduism and the caste system' says Nandini Goptu³⁰. Swami Acchutanand concluded that the caste uplift programmes of the Samaj were to increase the number of Hindus to appropriate greater political representation from other religious groups and at the same time forcing the untouchables to remain in perpetuity without sharing the benefits. He and his followers drew inspiration from bhakti and formulated the ideology of Adi-Hindu. They developed their own interpretation of the history of the Untouchables and the religion in India. Adi-Hindu ideology stressed on education for social and cultural liberation. They argued that illiteracy was the root cause of domination by upper castes. Swami Acchutanand accorded spiritual introspection by which one could arrive at true knowledge. Introspection would lead to self realization which would facilitate the articulation of autonomous value system that was imposed by higher castes. He urged: "Do not follow any ideology (*mat*) because you have been hearing it for a long time, or because it is held by some great (*bade*, literally big, implies a socially superior person of upper class or caste) person or because it is the view held by any cult or sect. Accept only an ideology that you have arrived at yourself"³¹. Every individual has a potential to think and decide for himself. By insisting on introspection and self realization Acchutanand could proclaim an independent identity for the untouchable groups which made them aware of their rights and mature their political understanding.

If Adi-Hindu movement spread in central parts of India Ad Dharm movement in Punjab was spear headed by Mangoo Ram. All lower caste movements

literally emphasized the importance of education in emancipation. Mango Ram opened a school for the lower caste children in his native village Mugowal from where he started the new religious movement. He emphasized the distinctness of the untouchables who were subjugated by foreign invasions. He said Ad Dharm was the original religion of the lower castes. He realized that liberation from the British would not be sufficient unless there is a total social and cultural transformation. Mangoo Ram was of the opinion that without a systematic struggle against Brahmanical orthodoxy millions of dalits who had been subjected to centuries of oppression could not be liberated³².

Then non-Brahman movement and counter religious movements were one of the most powerful secularizing movements confronting the upper caste dominated national movement and upper caste defined Hindu religion. If most of these movements remained regional Ambedkar was a giant figure among the leaders of the dalit liberation who perhaps is the first person attempt to build an all-India lower class movement as an alternative to National Congress. He tried to join along with other leaders like Periyar, Mangoo Ram and others to forge a non-Congress alliance. He launched movements against untouchability and struggled for civil rights. Ambedkar started movements for the use of public wells, ponds and right to enter temples. Ambedkar continuously clashed with Gandhi and he systematically debunked the congress as well as Gandhi.

Gandhi was strong believer of varna theory and never repudiated the caste system of dividing men into four groups. Retaining the caste system Gandhi wanted to abolish only untouchability by which the excluded untouchable masses could be integrated into the four fold varna system. Gandhi was against temple entry for the lower castes unless the temple custodians approved it. In contrast Ambedkar repudiated the entire caste system. For Ambedkar social emancipation should precede political freedom. A visionary, a great scholar and national leader had to face personal indignities for being a lower caste. The message was crystal clear that the struggle of the lower castes was not for mere certain social and civil rights but 'to assert that we too are human beings like others. He exposed the sacredness in the sacred law books of the Hindus and brought out their horrors:

1. Graded inequality between the different classes;
2. Complete disarmament of the shudras and the untouchables;
3. Complete prohibition of the education of the shudras and the untouchables;
4. Ban on the shudras and the untouchables occupying places of power and authority;
5. Ban on the shudras and the untouchables acquiring property; and
6. Complete subjugation and suppression of women³³.

In his writings and speeches Ambedkar consistently highlighted the second class status to the lower castes. He tirelessly worked to liberate the depressed classes. When all his efforts failed Ambedkar along with millions of dalits converted into Buddhism.

It is to be noted that the above mentioned multifarious dalit movements were not just movements for amelioration of their respective caste. They had the agenda of transforming the social structure as a whole. Secularization and democratization was inbuilt in these egalitarian movements. As Gail Omvedt says: "The main figures of this larger anti-caste movements.....all attacked the system of exploitation at all levels, culturally, economically and politically. They challenged the 'Hindu-nationalism' which was emerging as a consequence of the elite organizing from the nineteenth century onward to define Indian Society, and the majority of Indian people, as essentially 'Hindu': not only did they criticize distortion and 'excrescences', they attacked Hinduism itself by arguing that it was in essence Brahmanical caste bound and irrational. They asserted that Hinduism had not been the religion and culture of the majority but rather was an imposed religion, and that escaping exploitation today required the low castes to reject this imposition, to define themselves as 'non-Hindu' and take a new religious identity. Phule tried to formulate a new, theistic religion; Periyar promoted atheism; Ambedkar turned to Buddhism; others in the Tamil Nadu non-brahman movement tried to claim Saivism as an independent religion, Narayanswami Guru formulated 'one religion, one caste, one God' while his more radical follower Ayyappan proclaimed 'no religion, no caste, and no God for mankind'. Whatever the specifications, the rejection of Hinduism remained a feature differentiating the anti-caste radicals from the reformers"³⁴.

Today looking at these secularizing movements social scientists put the onus on the leaders for failing to overcome their own caste cocoon and lacked any political and economic vision. Any reform to succeed requires the support of the state without which it is bound to fail. Even the protestant reformation led by Martin Luther would not have succeeded without the support of state. As Talcott Parsons remarks, “the parallel events in the Reformation involve Luther’s alliance with German princes. Had not this religious innovation, too, enlisted political power during its crucial period, it could never have succeeded”³⁵.

Social reforms taken up by upper caste required state intervention and the reformation initiated by lower castes to succeed required the support of the nationalists as well as the state. The buttressing of the upper castes in the initial centuries of colonial rule had empowered the dominant castes who now had a vested interest in maintaining status quo. Minor intervention of the British on behalf of the upper caste reformists to reform minor upper caste customs and practices was strongly resisted and considered it as an intervention in the religious affairs. Nationalists like Tilak mobilized the masses to defend the religious customs. If the attitude of the nationalists to bring reform in respect of women was negative the question of dismantling caste structures was never in the horizon. Without opening the gates for the lower caste their movement never had any chance of success. Ambedkar makes this point very pertinent by citing the examples of France and Japan: “In France when the Revolution broke out and demanded equality, the governing class in France voluntarily came forward to give up its powers and its privileges and to merge itself in the mass of the nation.....The attitude of the governing class in Japan during the period between 1855 to 1870 – a period in which the Japanese people were transformed from a feudal society into a modern nation—was even more patriotic.....the Daimyos and the Samurai realized that it was impossible to transform this feudal society with its class composition and class rights into a modern nation with equality of citizenship. Accordingly the Daimyos charged with the spirit came forward to surrender their privileges and to merge themselves in the common mass of people”. When comparing the French and Japanese nationalists in giving up their privileges with the Indian nationalists Ambedkar says

it is “just the opposite. The governing class in India has no such intention of making any sacrifice on the altar of Indian freedom. Instead of surrendering its privileges in the name of nationalism, the governing class in India is using or misusing the slogan of nationalism to maintain its privileges”³⁶.

What does it mean to separate religion and state in India? Primarily it has to be recognized that for orientalist's, Hinduism was inseparable from caste system. It may also be noted that the Hindu revivalists and later the nationalist systematically integrated religion with caste. The varnashramadharma found in brahmancial scriptures and texts became the part and parcel of Hinduism. Colonial unification and the process of bureaucratization had unified the sacred and the profane. Caste system became a valued system for the Hindus not only to define the social composition of Hinduism and bestow meaning to a religious community but also to distinguish themselves from other religions like Islam and Christianity. The non-distinction between the spheres of the sacred and the profane were always made by groups who were bound together in Sanskrit texts and rituals and united by their common twice born status. These groups struggle for political power under the garb of anti-colonial national movement celebrated Hinduism as a tolerant religion which answered the problem of inter-religious strife as well as the problem encountered by modernity and western civilization. The anti-secularist assume that the western oriented concept of secularism is inapplicable to Indian conditions. The secularists see secularism as an answer to communal strife. Thus they celebrate the caste ridden religion and society of Hinduism as a tolerant religion.

Anti-caste movements had by necessity a regional basis and character because firstly nature of caste system varied regionally based on the language they spoke. Secondly the lower caste leaders were first generation literates. Unlike the lower castes the scattered dominant castes united with common sacred customs and practices now came together bound by English education, bureaucratic positions and obsession for political power in the emerging representative institutions. The centralizing tendency of the national movement ensured that such movements were scuttled. Backward classes movement could be effective and operate on an ideology churned out through the immediacies of

the injustice of casteism at the regional level. A particular caste set up corresponded with a linguistic region. So in abstraction the ideology to the national level became discrepant with the actual caste relations at the base. Movements having a regional character were then completely denied legitimacy of viciously abstracted to the national level. And needless to say, the movements were invariably jinxed. Hence, nationalism through diverse ways was an effective ploy against the aspirations of lower castes.

Another aspect of nationalism was that it bore great danger to secularizing movements. To deny legitimacy to the secularizing movements nationalism operated on an absolutised east-west or colonizer and colonized dichotomy. This dichotomy which went with the interest of the upper caste, was only the tension of adaptation, but when it came to the interest of the deprived castes, it acquired the character of a cultural confrontation. So such absolutised dichotomies always carried the conceit of the dominant sections of society. It was thus the deep contradiction and potential conflicts within the traditional order, while being affected by colonial changes that were being coped with, through the absolutised idiom of nationalism. Nationalism succeeded in absolutising east-west dichotomy. Communalism tries to absolutise Hindu-Muslim Divide. The method and purpose are the same.

The central thesis of secularization in India should be conceptualized as the process of societal modernization which is a process of functional differentiation and emancipation of the lower castes/dalits from social and religious spheres. Struggle against caste system and inegalitarian elements in religion need not be concluded as dissolution of religion. All that is required from anti-secularist and religionist is to realize that abolition of caste system should serve the vehicle for establishing secular and egalitarian state and society.

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CONCLUSION

The question concerning the conceptual utility of secularism by which the major problem of inter-religious strife can be addressed has aroused great interest and vivid discussion amongst scholars. A whole spate of books, articles, commentaries have appeared. Much of the literature is a reaction against the rise of communal violence against the Muslims. There are a growing number of scholars who are sceptic about the potentiality of secularism in fighting communalism. Communal riots and communal politics in India have also occasioned considerable attention from social scientists and individual from all walks of life. Here communalism is seen as the politics of India's two largest religious communities – the Hindus and the Muslims. Coupled with the Hindu-Muslim communal politics one can evidently notice violent atrocities unleashed on tribals, lower castes, other religious minorities and marginalized groups. Among the exploited communities the lower castes or dalits face innumerable difficulties in leading a normal life. Ironically they all belong to the majority Hindu religion of India. Focusing on the religious strife between Hindus and Muslims has been the predominant concern of academicians. The same social scientists and citizens' concern is strikingly absent on the question of caste system, caste atrocities, caste conflict. More importantly the degree of scholarly attention is absolutely negligent in looking at the religious and caste strife holistically. Micro studies and fragmented analysis is the hall mark of social science research. For all the sophistication in the scholarship of theorization of communalism as political expression of religious grievances fails to provide a compelling account of the state sponsored violence and state participation in the anti-dalit, anti-Christian and anti-tribal atrocities and violence unleashed against other marginalized sections of the society. Studies on religious violence in particular have many weaknesses.

- Firstly the violence unleashed on lower castes, tribals and religious communities other than Muslims are downplayed.
- Secondly little attention is given to the colonial construction of state and religion.
- Thirdly little weight is granted to the multiplicity of rituals, beliefs, sects and cults within the majority Hindu religion.
- Fourthly they miss the profound role of the state in maintaining the caste and religious divisions.
- Lastly the colonially constructed religious communities are taken for granted as political communities.

These weaknesses are inter-related stemming ultimately from the conception of Hindu religious community as a homogeneous community which influence the content of homogeneity without emphasizing the heterogeneous elements within Hinduism.

Indian polity and society was dramatically altered under colonialism and recreated in post-independent India. It is undergoing rapid socio-political and economic changes. Religious and caste conflict is threatening to engulf the fabric of Indian society and polity. In addressing these issues social scientist, commentators, journalist and leading politicians constantly tell us that the polity built on fragile concept of secularism is imported from the west or difficult to adapt to religious state like India. At the micro level society is highly religious hence the imposition of secularism from the macro level is bound to fail. For them it is riddled with problems as in social life religion is part and parcel of one's life and any explanation on the ongoing religious politics and conflicts have little meaning or validity. Further they argue that the whole realm of secular politics has lost its capacity to inspire and has lost its ability to guide and influence society. A general understanding among many social scientists in India is that in a religiously constituted society religion is not contradictory to political and economic life. Public debates and discourses are dominated by arguments about the lack of public space for religion. The debates and discussions are taking place in the background of the assumption that forces of modernisation

and industrialisation will dissolve caste and religious boundaries. Instead the whole realm of politics has resulted in the reassertion of the very identities which caused great upheavals in the struggle against colonial rule. Hence a meaningful separation of religion and state is not possible. This position has many limitations.

1. Postulating a unilinear development of secularism as separation of state and religion has obscured not only our understanding of other important development but also the democratization of religion, economic, social and political structures. By arbitrarily defining secularism as a separation of state and religion, denial of religious practice in public, religion as opium have led to the unidentification of the process of secularization and democratic changes that have taken place in the formation of western secular state.
2. The crude distinction made between east and west fails to advance in grasping the transition the west has made from pre – modernity to modernity. Pre modern European states were ascriptive societies legitimized by religion. The transition from pre-modern ascriptive societies to modern egalitarian societies and democratic states is the crux of the secular history in the west. This process of transition has been obscured by the dichotomous division of the study of secularism as east and west. Movements for egalitarianism are found in India too. Denying the relevance of western concept of secularism has consequently generated endless false analogies between western secularism and Indian secularism.
3. The western model postulated by critics of secularism in India as irrelevant are simplistic without taking into account complex changes that Western Europe underwent. The early stages of secularism were characterized by conflict between the king and the pope and state and the church theorized in two sword theory and under the broad idioms of secular and the sacred. The volatile changes of democratization, egalitarianism, enlightenment movement, decline of the ascriptive social order meant the decline of the influence of pre modern religious values and its power of legitimation.

As in the west one may find it difficult to locate Christian theory of two swords or Christian realm of heaven and earth. The broad agreement among many social scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists is that western secular model is inappropriate to Indian conditions as India is a religious society. This has narrowed the scope of historical enquiry and limited the development of a theory of secularism. Areas of social and religious conflict are not to be limited to action of those religious groups that openly proclaim their religious ideology. Instead conflicts taking place at micro level along with macro level conflicts have to be integrated in the ongoing analysis of any socio-political and religio-cultural conflicts. The intersection between religion and the state shaped religious identities, political institutions and society. Religion and state affect each other and historical circumstances determine the relationship and evolution of state as well as religion.

Secularism is understood as the process where a split takes place between the church and the state and the process of secularisation as a process where the church loses its property to the state and in the process loses its temporal power. It can be loosely referred to as the transition from religion to non-religious world. Such kind of a conflict cannot be located in non-European societies. But the content and context of secularism has to be redefined and re-contextualized in Indian scenario. If sacredness was church and Christianity in the west, what constituted the sacred in India? Irrespective of who ruled the state he had to negotiate not only with religious communities but also various egalitarian and non-egalitarian forces. How imperialism which was the state in India negotiated various religious communities and egalitarian movements must be the thrust of the secularism in India.

During the advent of British everyone was illiterate. Literacy was restricted to the upper order of the society. The British had to seek literate government officials among the literary castes who became indispensable part of the political system. The colonial state favoured bureaucratic positions and in no time lower rungs of state hierarchy were filled with upper rungs of Indian society. The consequence of this relationship was that the valorisation and empowerment of the traditional socio-religious dominant groups who were now invested with

secular political power. They were granted political authority to implement the codified laws. This collusion was the new political organisation where political authority was fused with the hierarchical social structure. Though the state seems all powerful, in fact it was subordinated to that of traditionalised society. The traditionalisation of state structure established political domination of those groups who hitherto were socially or religiously dominant.

Pre-colonial rule was not based on the basis of varna or Hindu code of law. State played a balancing role by patronising various religions and sects. Religious patronage by the state was not monopolised by any particular religion. Hinduism as a pan-Indian religion never existed. The transformation of fragmented social polity into a pan-Indian religio-political community took place under the tutelage of colonial-brahmanical nexus. With the integration of regional kingdoms a pan-Indian colonial structures extended its politico-military authority incorporating the dominant groups. The colluded dominant groups achieved ascendancy in the emerging and expanding colonial administration. Glorification of the Sanskrit texts, expanding the varna order universally all over the sub-continent were fused into the governing practices of British imperial state. As a consequence Varna order became the new socio-political order. The Hindu suzerainty expanded cutting across the linguistic and other territorial barriers. The colonial state had predominantly a Hindu vision of the world. The colonial state's legitimacy was derived from the fragmented dominant groups.

The organisation of modern politico-administrative structures on religious basis formalised and systematised the modern state and the segmented society. The union of the social and the political, the fusion of the sacred and the profane, the amalgamation of all castes into one monolithic religion enabled the dominant castes a tremendous influence on social, political, economic, cultural and religious life and enhanced their power and prestige. The transformation has led to the ascendance of religion.

In the modern colonial state and bureaucracy the dominant castes exercised immense power over all aspects of life. The colonial administration relying on the orientalist construction of religious identities and communities gave the socially influential class an immense recognition and opportunity to enter the secular

world. Hindu religion and practices gained highest patronage from the state. The transformation in the traditional social hierarchy and accommodation of the principle of a new system of hierarchy began with the consolidation of British rule. In the economic sphere the important changes that occurred were diversification of trade, industrialization and urbanization. This disrupted the localised socio-economic system, but only in that its localised nature was to be broken. It was no massive dislocation because it was the beneficiaries of the traditional set up who eagerly appropriated the benefits from the new system. The rest were totally excluded.

The history of the subjection of the lower castes under colonialism was marked by the intimate collaboration of orientalist, pundits, armed violence and caste persecution. The collaboration of the British with the dominant natives had pre-eminently religious vision of Indian history and society. The forging of religious link between the fragmented dominant castes and the scattered sects and contradictory ways of living became the new religion valorising and regrouping the traditional groups. The excluded masses of lower castes were turned into the unequal members of the newly defined religion. Thus the state took recourse to the regrouped traditional castes with whom it had economic, political and religious link. The conflictive and contradictory structure of domination gradually led to restructuration of traditional religious beliefs which were subjected to monolithic and monopolistic religious system. The restructured religious system had the power to eliminate indigenous religious system, assimilate the eliminated religious groups and practices, subordinate the assimilated religious practices and marginalise any threat inherent in the asymmetrical amalgamation.

Thus religion or culture was the main force that maintained the caste system. Further restriction of mobility, extreme economic deprivation of certain sections, and political non-interference proved effective. The crux of social organisation was the hard bond between caste and religion. One important aspect of these changes in India was that it had not evolved directly through the existing socio-economic system. It was in the nature of consignment that was imposed and eagerly appropriated by the upper castes. This meant that the effects of the processes would initially concur with the traditional system. The effect on social

relationship and the substantial benefits offered by the colonial changes reinforced the traditional order.

The unification of India under a single administrative set up was another important change that took place in India. This sort of unity had never been achieved before, but only at the level of Brahminical ideology. Apart from the various sacred texts one important indicator of the pan-Indian nature of Brahmanic ideology was the Varna theory. Seemingly formulated to grant religious legitimation to the caste system there are three other aspects to it which ought to be recognised. Firstly its basic nature as an abstraction of various forms of caste divisions or as an ideal type. Secondly its applicability all over India. Thirdly the invariable correspondence of the Brahmin component with actual form of caste system all over India.

Thus the appropriation of the substantial benefits of colonial changes by the upper castes and the administrative unification of India shows the initial concurrence of modernity with tradition as being a tremendous boost to the Brahmins. However, the percolation of the benefits to the lower orders of the society, liberal ideas contained in it, political and judicial processes, and the extreme emphasis on economic forces brought about wide dislocation in the traditional social relations and drastic change in the source and nature of power. Modernity in India instead of triggering differentiation with secularization has integrated and retraditionalised state and society. In modernity religion becomes one of the sub-systems under the state. But in India state and religion evolved simultaneously reinforcing each other realms and mutually legitimizing one another. Instead of freeing the spheres of social, economic, cultural and political life from caste and religion, modernity comprehensively embedded the hierarchical varna system without allowing them to pursue their own paths of emancipation. Modern secular politics did not evolve any independent or alternative principles and values to counter religious sanction of hierarchical social order associated with religion. Religious principles and values were not differentiated from political ones. This implied that principles of caste came to play a predominant role in politics and public life of Indian democracy.

In this context, nationalism, as it had erupted then was to cope with these portents of changes. Limited social mobility due to the colonial modernity initiated the process of break up of older form of community especially those features to which religion had given symbolic expression. The reformation of Hindu social practices lead by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others was not a reformation of caste Hindu society. It was restricted to the reformation of certain socially evil practices of the Brahmins. As a matter of fact these reforms were not based on any rational-empirical enquiry but an inquiry into the essence of scriptural sanction. The essence of the reform movement was to fine-tune the archaic social practices into modernity rather than to transform the social structure or purge caste abuses and practices. The most important result of the reform movement was that it united the fragmented socially dominant groups to prevent the state from bringing any changes in the archaic social structure and practices. Nationalism was primarily an ideology contained in these processes of change embodying its absolutising spirit. However in India, it was to bear this utility for tradition. Though Brahmanic culture had a pan-Indian quality, its instrumentality in maintaining an unjust system was in completely denying access to it to majority of the people. But with the rise of national movement in India, the Brahmanic culture acquired the status of national culture. This was intrinsically tyrannical to vast sections of the population. Again it represented the effort to extend culture as the source of power over and against new forces. Hence it sought to curtail the aspirations of those sections that began to see hope in the changes of colonial modernity. The absolutising spirit of nationalism here bore utility not with regard to the general design of the expansion of the benefits but to the appropriatory and restrictive design of the upper castes of Indian society.

Advances in transport and communication strongly contributed to the conceptualisation of revitalised religion. Social reform was confined to the minority upper castes and remained risky in view of the threat of being out casted. Conformity to caste was a pre-condition to access civil liberties and participation in the emerging public sphere. In the course of the nineteenth century movements for social equality, movements critical of religion and revival of Buddhism gained momentum. These movements were secular movements in

the context of political ascendance of Hinduism. Nationalist articulation and commentaries of Hinduism were indistinguishable for their social and political outlook. The recurrent theme in the multiple commentaries on Hinduism was on the question of inequalitarian social order where there was a progressive widening of a gap between the socio-political empowered upper caste and the exploited marginalised lower castes.

Hindu religion and practices made no distinction between private and the public or political. Religion was related to the individual, family, group and addressed broader issues concerning society. An individual born to a particular caste was condemned to remain within that caste. His food habits, marriage, dress code, occupation was determined by his caste ascription and his status in the social hierarchy was sacralised by religion. Religious scriptures spoke of Varna order as a social and cosmic harmony. The public life was an extension of the private. The private is public in the sense that his social birth determined the public identity. The religious life was public in so far as one could not give up his ascriptive identity. The unification of the private and public was universally recognised. The lower castes were expected to acknowledge their lower position in public - separate seats in public function, eating food in separate utensils in hotels, denial of civil right of movements, prevented from utilising public wells and ponds. Religious revivalists and nationalists spurned the dualism of public and private by laying claim to the public what was dear to the private. It made claims which were incompatible to modern civil society. The fulfilment of socio-cosmic harmony was to be enforced in the political realm. Nationalism gave a formal assent to the political religion. Adhering to religion was patriotism. Any minor resentment was quickly seen as an attempt to destroy religion, tradition and patriotism by dividing the loyalty.

What is sacred and secular has to be defined in Indian context. The contrasting difference between western emergence of secular state and Indian state was that western states emerged breaking away from Christendom. Whereas in India the state emerged and evolved under colonialism by articulating and defining the contents of various religions and the constitution of religious communities. In west if it was the separation of the sacred and profane, in India it was the unification of the sacred and the profane. If it was fragmentation of

Christendom and the emergence of states in the west, it was the emergence of pan-Indian state unifying fragmented states. So what was sacred and secular? It would be misleading if we argue that religion as sacred and state as secular because the emergence of pan-Indian state and construction of religion was a simultaneous process. The Christianity embedded in the church which gave a predominant position to priests and the Pope constituted the sacred. The western nation states broke themselves away from church and Christendom. Whereas in India, in the absence of any religious institutions like the church, caste system constituted the sacred institution. Emergence of modern state in India as a secular institution under colonialism subsumed the sacred. The partners of secular administration of the colonial state were the Brahmins and other dominant castes. The partners of oriental understanding of Hinduism were pundits. The oriental understanding of Hindu religion became the yardstick to categorize various sections of society through the process of census. The sacredness of caste system was later reemphasized by revivalists like Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda and Aurobindo. Political implementation of social blue print became the agenda of the national movement.

The sacred versus profane refers to other worldly versus worldly. The sacred refers to holy whereas the profane refers to unholy, secular, material and the mundane. In Indian religious traditions one has to determine what constituted sacred and profane. In Hinduism birth and rebirth are the results of Karma. It is the consequence of one's Karma in the previous birth that put him into a precise caste in the present birth. Belief in a particular god or idol is not a condition for a Hindu. He is free to believe in any god, worship any number of gods and build temples installing any idol of the god. Irrespective of his beliefs a Hindu is tied to caste and has to perform the functions inherent to his caste. He had no opportunity to change his caste in this life. Obliging to fulfil his caste duties obediently alone will guarantee a higher status in his next birth. To preserve the caste order was one of the main duties of the ruler. So what constitutes sacred in Hindu religious system was not the belief in god, the supernatural or performing penance to identify himself with god but a strict adherence to the caste. All the social and religious revolts in India were mainly against rigid classification of human beings based on birth.

If secularism/secularization is generally understood as the decline of the sacred/religion we have to contextualize that which constitutes the sacred in Hindu religion. Undoubtedly what was sacred from ancient to modern times in Hindu religious system was the varna system. Secularism and secularization in India should be referred and contextualized to the anti caste, anti/varna and anti brahminical ideology and practices. It should denote the process by which the caste system as a hierarchical order loses all its dominance and authority. Secularization as a concept in India should refer to the actual historical process of anti-caste forces and movements and the role of egalitarian religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Lingayat religion and the bhakti movement which challenged the hierarchical classification of men. These movements and religions articulated new social system based on equality and egalitarianism with a strong thrust against varna system. The structural thrust of caste and anti-caste spheres has to be distinguished and integrated into the concept of secularism in India. The concept of secularization in India should primarily refer to the decline of caste and non-discrimination of individual based on birth.

It would be misleading to situate secularism as communal harmony without taking into account the mass struggles against oppressive religious social practices. In fact recent social science research has highlighted the link to the lower caste emergence and communalism. Their conclusion is that where ever and whenever the lower castes have struggled or emerged communalism has been the weapon of neutralising them. Therefore secularism in India is not be seen in the success or failure of religious harmony between two dominant religious communities but has to be related to the facets of lower caste struggle for dignity, rights and equality. The forces that set themselves against varna system have to be called secular in India. While the struggle against hierarchical social order and the process which eventually led to challenge the varna ideology and replacing it with alternative religions with a rational and scientific outlook should be termed as secularization. The constant friction between varna social order and anti varna movements should be the context of locating secularism and secularisation in India. It should be related to facets of social change and not narrowed down to the relationship between state and religion and religion and politics.

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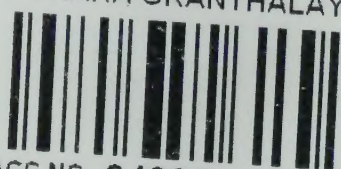
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